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MR. CHARLES BANTEM RECEIVES A SOUND THRASHING.

## AUNT DORA'S PLOT

NOVELETTE  
[CONCLUDED.]

### CHAPTER IX.

VE MORRISON had been in the town of Muddlesboro' for the first time on the same day that Aunt Dora arrived in that flourishing manufacturing centre. During a consultation with her aunt as to what that stout and important person should wear at the tenants' ball, it was decided that a rich satin gown, which had been presented to her by Lady Bantem, should be retrimmed for the occasion. So Eve proposed to walk to the town, about two miles distant, for the purpose of procuring a suitable trimming.

Mrs. Lane objected to the girl walking so far, being a stranger, and alone.

"Oh, aunty, I shall enjoy a nice long walk along the country road so much! Besides, you say the shop I am going to is not quite in the town. I shall easily find it."

"But why not let Jim drive you over in the dog-cart, child?"

"Because I like walking better than riding in a dog-cart, aunty, dear."

"What an obstinate girl you are, to be sure!"

But Eve had her way, and started on her pedestrian trip to Muddlesboro' about an hour before Lady Bantem and Chawley were driven along the same road in their victoria to meet Aunt Dora.

Eve Morrison had purchased her trimmings, and was walking quickly back to the Hollyhocks, before the train arrived that brought Aunt Dora. The girl stepped out briskly with

elastic step and flushed cheeks, for she already felt benefited by the change of air. She was fast nearing the Hollyhocks when she became aware of the presence of a man standing leaning against a turnstile that led into some pasture land belonging to Grayfriars. Not caring to be stared at, she let her parasol droop on that side, and kept on her way; but the next moment, hearing a quick step behind her, she turned, and beheld her new friend, Mr. Evelyn. He was dressed differently to what he was when she saw him last, but still in the most gentlemanly style. He stood before her with his deer-stalker hat uplifted, his face beaming with smiles, and looking very handsome.

"Ah, Miss Morrison, are you pretending not to see me? Why do you wish to avoid me like this? I have been looking out for you all day, and feel certain you avoid me," he says, gazing with half-sad, half-smiling eyes in the



So Cary disappeared through one door, as Lady Bantem, Chawley, and Aunt Dora entered by another.

"Oh!" cried Aunt Dora. "What a handsome room for such an ugly house! I suppose you are aware that this monstrous pile of bricks is as ugly as it well can be?"

Nobody answered, or protested against this, so she went on, after a short pause—

"Is this your daughter, Lady Bantem? I forget your Christian name. Oh, ah! I remember now; it was Emily, of course. Is this your daughter? Yes? She don't favour her father's people. No, of course not. You are dark, Lady Bantem. Isn't there another girl? I understood there was another girl! Come here, my dear, and let me kiss my brother Giles's granddaughter. Where's your sister, my dear?"

So she kisses Jo on both cheeks, that young lady submitting silently and reluctantly to the embrace. Chawley has escaped from the drawing-room, and Lady Bantem quite collapses between heat, rage, and mortification, and drops helplessly into a big chair.

#### CHAPTER X.

"Oh, Miss Dora—I mean, Mrs. Bartlett—I am so glad to see you! It's more than forty years since you went away a few months before I was married. I was only a gal when you left England."

"And my sister Helen, Lane? I wrote to you about my sister. I begged of you to find her, and I would reward you well."

"Poor Miss Helen is dead and gone, Miss Dora."

"She had a daughter, did she not?"

"Ah, poor Miss Lily is dead and gone also."

"Oh, Lane!" moans Aunt Dora, clasping her thin hands over her eyes in great distress.

"But, Miss Dora, Lily Forbes was married and left a daughter. Would you care to know anything about your sister's grandchild?"

"Oh, Lane, speak for Heaven's sake! Do not keep me in suspense. Is Helen's grandchild living?"

"Let me whisper to you, Miss Dora, for we have ears sometimes."

The old housekeeper, leaning on the arm of the chair in which Aunt Dora is seated, bent her mouth close to that lady's ear, and whispered low and rapidly for several seconds; and then imparts her whispered information. Aunt Dora's face assumes many expressions and changes—joy, sorrow, surprise, anger, amazement, gratitude, cast alternate lights and shadows on the expressive face.

At last, starting to her feet with a cry, she exclaimed—

"I am seeking for a man of that name. My second husband's nephew."

"Then he was Lily Forbes's husband?"

"And he is dead."

"Yes; but his daughter lives, Miss Dora."

"Oh, Lane, you have been a good and faithful servant, and you will see that I am not ungrateful."

"Ah, Miss Dora! I am glad to be able to help my old master's daughter in any way. My lady gives me the privilege of waiting upon you. So I'll just make you as comfortable as the day is long, Miss Dora. And my boy and the young ladies can turn their noses up as much as they like at you. I heard 'em say, Miss Dora, as your husband lost all his money, and how you are just as poor as a church mouse, an' that you was a-coming here to be a burd'n to 'em. But I have a bit of money by me; and my Eve is going to start a millinery business on her own account, and I am a-going to keep house for her."

The housekeeper paused, and looked at Aunt Dora in an uncertain way.

"Well, go on, Lane."

"I don't mean to offend you, Miss Dora; and I hope you won't think ill of me for what I am a-going to say. But the other day Sir Giles and my lady were a-takin' about you. They didn't think I heard 'em, but I did. They were a-planning to get you a cottage in some London suburb and have a woman to wait on

you, and pay you a weekly allowance—about as much as a journeyman mechanic takes home to his wife on a Saturday night. Just think of that, Miss Dora; and Sir Giles had all your fortune, and Miss Helen's also!"

"He had, Lane!"

"Now, I was just a-thinking, Miss Dora, that if you would come and live with Eve and I, we would do our very best to make you comfortable."

"My poor old friend, I shall not forget your kindness," and Aunt Dora took off her blue glasses to wipe the moisture from her eyes. "Lane, you have told me a secret that I have promised to keep until the proper time comes to make it known. Now, in return for your confidence, I shall tell you a secret that is no less surprising."

Aunt Dora left her chair and crossed the room to where Mrs. Lane was seated. Stooping before her, and looking steadfastly into her kind hazel eyes, Aunt Dora spoke to the housekeeper in a low, grave tone. Lane's eyes growing wider and wider as she listened.

"Oh, Miss Dora! Oh, my—"

"Hush—h! Don't get excited, Lane," and Aunt Dora placed her hand over the astonished woman's mouth. "You are a bad actress, Lane. Remember, walls have ears."

"Oh, Miss Dora," she says, in a tone of protest, pressing her hand on her forehead, as if to help her to collect her thoughts.

"I will go now, Miss Dora. Will you go down to five-o'clock tea, or will you have it in your room?"

"I'll have it here, Lane."

"Then I'll bring you up a nice tea, Miss Dora." And Lane, having composed her face, went slowly out of the room.

"Miss Morrison—haw—you see, I know your—er—name. I'm delighted—er—to see you. Two whole days—aw—and nights at the Hollyhocks—aw—and the first time—er—I had a chance—er—of seeing you!"

"Oh, Mr. Bantem! Really, I—I did not think I was intruding upon anybody," Eve cries, in a startled tone, and losing her presence of mind for a moment. She had turned a sharp angle of the staring red-brick mansion, and found herself in a small enclosed garden, where some fine roses were blushing unseen. She had seen the roses from one of the windows, and, wishing to procure a few to place in a glass bowl on her aunt's table, had come out for that purpose, little thinking that Mr. Chawley Bantem had stretched his long, lanky limbs on a rustic seat under the drooping branches of a weeping ash.

"Er—intruding—haw! A most agreeable surprise—er—my dear Miss Morrison. When you came out here—er—to look at the sun and sky, as some—er—poet fellow says—aw—you didn't expect to find a—aw—gentleman here who has been hopelessly—aw—seeking you—er—for the last day or two."

"You have been seeking me, Mr. Bantem?" she asks, as, halting, she stands before him, quite collected now.

"Ya—aw. I have taken quite a fancy to you—er—my dear Miss Morrison; and—aw—if—er—you will—aw—cut that other fellah I—er—aw spooning with you—er—"

"Will you allow me to pass, Mr. Bantem? I am sorry for disturbing you. Had I been aware of your presence in this garden I should not have entered it."

"Allow me to—er—finish what—er—I was about to say, my dear," he says, attempting to take her hand as he stood in her path, and prevented her escape.

"No, no, Mr. Bantem! I don't want to hear what you have to say; it would be utterly useless."

"If you give up speaking to that fellah from London, I'll make a lady of you. Such a pretty—er—girl—working at a dressmaker's! I give you my word of honour that it is—er—a quite harrowing to think about. I'm—aw—a great favourite with the ladies—aw—and—or—you prefer that—aw—cad to me? I'll—ah—

horsewhip him—er—if he speaks to you again, dem me if I don't! I want just such a pretty girl as you!"

Eve's fair face flushed crimson at the insult conveyed in his words. Being a young woman of fine physique, with a fair share of physical strength, and goaded by the insults of a brainless masher, she dashed forward, hurling him from her path as easily as she would a kitten. He fell in a clump of shrubs, while Eve walked away with the grace and dignity of a princess, and appeared before her aunt with flashing eyes and crimson cheeks, and some scarlet and yellow roses in her hand.

"Where have you been, child, and what be the matter wi' you? Bless me if you don't look in a regular tantrum!"

"Well, aunty, Mr. Bantem was in the garden when I went to get these roses, and he spoke to me in a very insulting manner."

"What! Master Chawley insult you!"

"Yes. He was lying on a garden seat, and I did not know he was there till he started up and stood in my path. I flung him on one side, and he fell among some bushes, and I dare say he is very angry. You know how strong I am if I'm in a temper, aunty?"

"You served him right, my child. What business had he to speak to you at all? He should keep his place."

"It don't matter now, aunty. Mr. Bantem is a very silly young man."

"Those roses look beautiful, Eve! I wish you would put them in a vase of water, and take them up to Mrs. Bartlett's room—the room we were putting in order the day you came here."

"Who is Mrs. Bartlett, aunty?"

"Sir Giles's aunt from New Zealand."

"Is she a very old lady, and rather odd-looking, with big blue glasses?"

"Yes, that's Aunt Dora—rather old, rather odd, and wearing big blue glasses!"

"I like old ladies, so I'll take the roses up to Mrs. Bartlett's room."

When a tap came at Aunt Dora's door, and it slowly opened, and a young girl entered, bearing a vase of roses in her hand, her presence seeming to bring sunshine into the dimly-lighted room the Bantems allotted to their poor relation, to the eyes of the startled woman the young girl, who stood holding the half-closed door in her hand, appeared more like an inhabitant of the next world than a sojourner in this.

"Why, it is the very girl that he was talking to in the road," Aunt Dora tells herself. Aloud she says, "Are you Mrs. Lane's niece, young lady?"

"Yes, madam."

"And your name is—"

"Eve Morrison, madam."

"Eve Morrison—Eve Morrison!" the elder lady repeats softly to herself.

"And you are a dressmaker, are you not?"

"No, madam; I am a milliner."

"You will go back to London, will you not?"

"Oh, yes, madam. My aunt wishes me to stay for the fete at Grayfriars. I have written to my employer in London for permission to stay a few days longer, and to ask her to send me something to wear."

"Ah! What are you going to wear—something very simple, I hope? You are quite pretty enough—quite too pretty—to require any setting off!"

"I have sent for a black lace dress. I had it last winter, and it is very becoming to me. It will do very nicely for the fete at Grayfriars."

"Yes, black lace would suit you, with your fair skin and golden hair. Well, my dear, I have a set of pearls that I brought with me from New Zealand. I intended to present them to one of Sir Giles's daughters, but they would not suit either of them; besides, I think those young ladies would prize a gift according to its value, not for the giver's sake; so I shall give them to you."

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"The young ladies might think it odd, madam."

"It don't matter, my dear. The pearls would not suit them, and I don't think they would wear them if they had them. The pearls are very beautiful, though not so valuable as you might imagine, and only a very good judge of such things would be able to detect that they are not real. They will suit you, dear; you are so fair and pretty. The young and lovely should always wear pearls. You are very young and very lovely, Eve. Your hair and complexion remind me of a sister I had long ago. I'll send the pearls by post when I go back to London the day after to-morrow. Are those roses for me, child? Yes? How fresh and beautiful they look! What a treat to see an English rose after all these years! Please to bring them nearer, that I may inhale their perfume."

When the girl drew near and stood by the 'ady's chair, she could see that Aunt Dora was not looking at the flowers she held towards her. Eve could feel that two keen blue eyes were watching her through the big blue glasses, and she was not a little puzzled at the interest this eccentric old lady from the Antipodes had taken in her welfare.

#### CHAPTER XI.

Two hours later, Eve Morrison walked into Muddlesboro' to make some purchases in fancy goods and stationery, and, having transacted her business satisfactorily, was returning to the Hollyhocks in the lovely summer dusk, indulging in a delightful reveries or blissful daydream, in which the fine form and handsome grave face and soft brown eyes of Mr. Evelyn came between all other objects.

Though a sensible, practical young woman, Eve Morrison is not exempt from some of the weaknesses of her sex, and she had been too much impressed by her late fellow traveller to be able to banish his image from her mind; but she was too wise and too cautious to compromise herself by giving him much encouragement.

"She would stay at the Hollyhocks until after the tenants' fete at Grayfriars," she told herself. "She would then go back to London without leaving any clue by which he could trace her to her place of business."

She knew the girls, or rather young ladies, at Madame's all had sweethearts, who waited for them every evening to take them to some place of amusement, and they often disturbed her when they came in late at night by waking her from her first sleep; though she often pitied them next day when they sat with drooping heads and sleepy eyes and listless hand and faded cheeks at their work.

"She would have no men waiting for her, or ringing Madame's bell, or walking up and down the opposite pavement while the girls took stock of them from behind the blinds," she told herself.

She resolved not to encourage Mr. Evelyn until he had proven himself—well, not exactly an aristocrat. She could hardly expect that, but a very respectable man, with ample means of keeping her in the comforts and some of the luxuries of life.

Such was the burden of Eve's thoughts as she walked lightly and briskly along the dusty road.

Passing by the low wall that divided the high road from the meadows, she paused to admire the sunset sky and landscape as the grey shadows of the summer dusk are creeping over the tawny corn fields. Far away in the western sky the sun is sinking in a glory of rose and amber, flecked with little grey and white cloudlets, and over all solemn silence reigns, except the distant hum of the town, that comes with a draway murmur on the ear with the bleating of sheep, the buzzing of insects, and the notes of the cuckoo in the woods of Grayfriars.

Eve is thinking how different it all is to Bond Street, and how beautiful the country is in this lovely June weather, when she is

startled by a sound behind her, and, looking round, she saw a man vault over the wall into the road. As he advanced towards her, she is conscious of an unpleasant sensation on recognising Charles Bantem.

"My dear Miss Morrison, what a delightful surprise—aw. I didn't expect this pleasure—er—er!"

Eve took no notice of this, but walked briskly and lightly along the dusty road.

"You were in no hurry just now when—er—you—aw—were looking straight across at that ricketty windmill yonder—er."

"Oh, yes, I was in a hurry; but I stopped to look at the lovely sunset. Ricketty windmill, indeed!"

"All dem rot!—aw—I beg your pardon. I never look at sunsets or sunrises. All very well for those artist fellahs to rave about—er—they must earn their bread and cheese at it—aw—er. But for a gentleman with plenty of money and the will to spend it, I like a pretty woman in the flesh better than your painted angels—er—on canvas. I give you my—er—Academy of honour that whenever I go to the Academy I do not look at the walls at all. I have enough to do to watch the pretty women—er—ah—promenading the rooms. The same at the opera—er—and—er—the theatre. When other fellahs—er—aw—are going dotty over some—or—piece—only a lot of wubbish some fellah—er—has, strung together—er—I have eyes only for the pretty ankles and jolly legs and arms—er—and fine busts. As for sunsets—bah!—all rot—er—don't you know it!"

"You have a poor appreciation of art, Mr. Bantem," Eve observed, with a gesture of disdain.

"Er—our people haven't. The last time we were in London, dad and the mater went to a sale of pictures—aw—in Piccadilly—er—things by some old—er—master, you know—aw. There was one picture that everybody wanted, but their purses were not long enough. Er—the bidding went up—aw—till at last it—aw—was knocked down to the mater for two thousand pounds. It's a splendid thing, you know, but dad or the mater don't care a straw for it—er—but its possession gives them—aw—a sort of triumph over those—er—who hadn't ready money enough to get it. By Jove! how you do walk! Quite—er—takes the breath out of me to keep up with you!"

"I must make haste; my aunt will be anxious."

"My dear—er—Miss Morrison, have you thought over what I said to you yesterday—aw?"

"By Jove! how you walk!—er—I have something to say to you—er—if you will stand here a moment—and—"

"Not now, Mr. Bantem. I am in a hurry—pray don't delay me."

"I'll be heard now—er—Miss Morrison," and seizing her hand he places himself before her, stopping her progress, as he did the previous day in the garden.

"Unhand me, sir! How dare you insult me like this!" she cries, struggling to free herself.

"Er—you are an awfully pretty gal, Miss Morrison—aw—and I am dead spoons on you. Er—I know you think a lot of that other fellah—but I—er—want you to throw him over for me—er—my dear."

"Mr. Bantem!"

"Allow me to—er—tell you what I intend doing for you—aw. I have plenty of money—er—you know. Er—I want you to meet me—er—in London, and we'll go to the—er—theatres—and opera, and see, and hear—aw—everything that is to be seen and heard. I'll—"

"Stand back, sir, and allow me to pass!"

"Don't you believe I can do this, my dear? Have you no ambition to live and dress like a lady? To wear all the—aw—newest and sweetest things in jewels, and gowns; to have the prettiest victoria in Hyde Park; and live in a bijou house—er—at St. John's Wood?"

He flings his disengaged arm round her supple, slim waist, and draws her towards him. Eve utters a cry more of anger than fear, as she struggles to free herself from his grip.

At that moment both are startled by the barking of a dog. Then Lion came bounding round a curve in the road, and, recognising Eve, shows his pleasure therewith by cutting some extravagant capers around her, much to the terror of Chawley.

"Lie down, you—aw—brute!—er. Down! I say. Aw—who the devil owns the nasty beast—aw?" lisp Chawley, as he aims two three savage kicks at Lion, who growls fiercely at him.

"This is Mr. Evelyn's dog, sir. Lion, dear old fellow, I am glad you are come!" Eve gasps, half laughing, half crying, with mingled emotions, as she holds him firmly by the broad silver collar to prevent him springing at Chawley.

"Mr. Evelyn. That's—aw—that other fellah I'll take a summons out for him—er—tomorrow for letting this savage beast run loose in the neighbourhood!"

"Don't you dare kick Lion, Mr. Bantem!" Eve cries, passionately, placing herself between the dog and Chawley's patent boot, receiving on her own ankle the kick intended for Lion.

She utters a cry, just as a dog-cart stops in the road, and a tall figure jumps out, and is recognised by Eve, Chawley, and Lion as Mr. Evelyn.

"What is the meaning of this? Why did you scream, Miss Morrison? Has he insulted you?" exclaimed Mr. Evelyn, grasping his chin menacingly.

"No," she answers, with a forced smile, as she tries to control a spasm of pain in her injured ankle.

"I saw him kick Lion."

"Your dawg attacked me—er. He would have sprang at me if Miss Morrison—aw—had not held him back."

"He didn't attack you for nothing. He can always pick out an evil-disposed person when he sees one. As for you, sir, if you had insulted Miss Morrison, I would have horsewhipped you! I have a good mind to horsewhip you for kicking my dog!"

"What, you will—er—a cad like you—aw?"

Mr. Evelyn took one stride forward, and, catching him by the collar, shook him until he shouted for mercy. Then, flinging him some yards off, he laid him still and unconscious by the roadside.

"Now, my dear girl, this is no place for you. Let me assist you into the trap, and drive you to the Hollyhocks. I'll put you down at the gate."

"No, don't trouble, Mr. Evelyn. It is only ten minutes to the Hollyhocks," she protests, as he leads her to the side of the dog-cart.

"I shall not permit you to go alone, dear. So put your foot on the step, and let me help you up."

"And will you leave Mr. Charles lying there?"

"Yes. Confound the young scoundrel! He'll get up as soon as my back is turned."

Urged by his strong will and strong arm, Eve suffered herself to be handed to the seat in the dog-cart, her champion seating himself beside her.

"Now, darling, won't you tell me why you looked so agitated when I came upon the scene just now?"

"Because I was annoyed at meeting Mr. Bantem, and vexed because he spoke to me."

"I thought he had insulted you?"

"Well, I take it as an insult for him to speak to me at all."

"What is he prowling about the roads for this evening?"

"I don't know. I had been shopping in Muddlesboro', and was returning along the road, when the lovely sunset attracted my attention. I stopped a minute or two to admire it, when somebody scrambled over the wall near me, and, when the figure approached,

I recognised Mr. Charles Bantem. I walked on, but he persisted in walking beside me, and addressing his conversation to me."

"May I ask, darling, what Mr. Bantem had to say for himself?"

"Only nonsense; you know his style!" she answers, evasively, and with a little laugh, not wishing to cause ill-feeling between those two.

"Here we are, dear."

This as he pulls up under the far-spreading branches of a great chestnut tree that grows outside the front gate.

"I go in by the side gate," Eve says, as he lifts her out of the trap.

"The side gate—why?"

"I'm a visitor to the housekeeper, not to the family," she says, shyly, and laughs a little.

"Ah!"

"You will not quarrel with Mr. Charles if you meet him?" she says, entreatingly.

"If he interferes with me I may horsewhip him, but I shall not quarrel with him."

"I hope he won't interfere with you."

Even in the twilight he can see the anxious expression in the beautiful grey eyes.

"You seem to be much concerned about that young scoundrel," he remarks, in a grieved tone.

"Because it will make it awkward for me to be mixed up in any unpleasant affair connected with him while I am staying at the Hollyhocks."

"Then he shall go free for your sake. And now good-bye, dear. I may not see you to-morrow, as Lord Steyne is expected; and Lady Steyne comes the next day, so I shall be busy."

"I wonder if I shall see Lord and Lady Steyne before I leave the Hollyhocks? I should like to see them; I hear so much about them."

"Oh, possibly, if you come to the tenants' site. I shall be there, and I can promise that you shall see them."

"Thank you."

"Good night, Eve. I must see you in that gate before I start. Here's Lion wants you to notice him. Lion knows his friends from his enemies."

"Good night, Lion, dear old fellow!" Eve says, as she pats the black, shaggy head.

Then, holding her hand out to Mr. Evelyn, she wishes him good night also. As he presses her fingers he draws her towards him, and kisses her for the first time. She disengages her hand with a wrench, and turns away without a word. He could see the fair face flush up, and, fearing she was offended, he called after her.

"Eve, Eve! you are not angry, dear?"

The girl did not even turn her head in reply, but, inserting a latchkey in a door in the brick wall, let herself in, closing the door behind her.

"Eve, Eve! do you hear me?" he calls, as he stands by the door listening for her reply; but the tap of her boot-heels on the gravel inside is all the reply he receives.

The rose-light was fading in the west, and the stars shining visibly in the fathomless, darkening blue, when Mr. Evelyn reached the spot where he left Charley Bantem lying apparently unconscious, but no still form marks the whiteness of the dusty highway.

Charley Bantem is not there, and Mr. Evelyn, giving the mare her head, is rattled along under the dusky shadow of the heavy foliage that droops over the park railings of Grayfriars; while Lion, with a look of grave importance in his big brown eyes, occupies the seat which Eve Morrison graced a few minutes ago.

#### CHAPTER XII.

"Yes, Lady Bantem, I am going back to London to-morrow, and I don't think I shall ever enter the Hollyhocks again."

It was Aunt Dora who spoke from the depths of a big chair, in the room allotted to her by her great-nephew, Sir Giles Bantem.

It was the same chair in which she sat during her interview with Eve Morrison a couple of hours before.

Shortly after Eve had started on her walk to Muddlesboro', Lady Bantem and Miss Carry decided to pay a visit to Aunt Dora in her room, as she declined to appear at the dinner-table. So they went up under pretext of seeing that she was comfortable, and all her wants supplied.

She sat in the big chair, looking very weak and ill, one hand clasping her gold-headed stick, the other, thin and white, resting on the arm of the chair; three or four antique rings gleaming, with dull lustre, on the thin fingers—rubies, very small and old, glowing dimly in their setting of dull-red gold, like half-burnt out fires. They might be valuable for their antiquity, and, like her gold-headed ebony stick, they might be relics of palmer days gone by. Her rusty black gown is not very eloquent of present prosperity.

She wears a white cap befitting her years, and two scanty braids of dark hair are drawn across her forehead. Her eyes shine through those hideous blue glasses, but it is impossible to tell their colour. Her face is delicate, and her thin, helpless lips seem to be drawn painfully within her toothless gums.

Lady Bantem, fat, but not fair, and more than forty, stands at a little distance. As a dummy for a handsome gown she is a success. She shows it off well, but though richly dressed she omits most of those minor details without which no lady's toilet is complete.

Carry, in an elegant gown of shimmering grey silk, with a great crimson rose at her throat, and her frizzy black hair in a state of fashionable dishevelment, leans languidly upon her mother's arm, and regards her elderly relative with an expression of supreme disdain.

"Will you tell me why you are going back to London, Aunt Dora?" her ladyship asks, trying to suppress her anger.

"Well, I'll tell you one reason to begin with. Giles Bantem's family do not want me at the Hollyhocks, and his youngest daughter is too impudent. There's two causes of my leaving."

"Aunt Dora—" exclaims Lady Bantem.

"Oh, ma! Do you hear that?" exclaims Miss Carry.

"Don't interrupt, Lady Bantem, if you please. Another reason for me going away is because the De Veres are coming to Grayfriars, and as I knew Lady Steyne out there in New Zealand, in my prosperous days, I don't care—"

"You know Lady Steyne in New Zealand! Is it possible!" exclaims Lady Bantem, excitedly.

"Why not? I knew the late Lord Steyne and his widow, the present Lady Steyne. I knew her before she became Lady Steyne."

"Good heavens! And you want to get away because she is coming to Grayfriars."

"Certainly."

"Don't go, Aunt Dora! Stay here, and we will make you as comfortable as possible. I'll buy you a new outfit of everything suitable. Just think what an advantage it would be to us if you would accompany the girls and I to Grayfriars when we call upon Lady Steyne the day after to-morrow! Shall have Miss Lee, a fashionable dressmaker in Muddlesboro', come here to make you a new black gown. There's Lane's niece can help her. They will have it done in time. Shall I order the carriage, and drive into town to see the dressmaker?"

"I must go to London to-morrow."

"But you can come back!"

"I shall not come back to the Hollyhocks."

"Don't be obstinate, Aunt Dora!"

"A friend has offered me a home with her in London."

"And have you accepted it?"

"Not yet; but I think I will do so."

"Don't until you first consult Sir Giles."

"Sir Giles, indeed! Pray what does he care what becomes of his poor relation?"

"Then you are not coming down to

dinner?" her ladyship says, ignoring Aunt Dora's observation.

"No; I don't feel inclined to do so."

"Come along, Carry. I must see your pa at once."

"Oh, aunty, how nice your satin gown looks, quite as good as new! With your pretty cap you'll look quite smart!" Eve cries, in a tone of rapture.

She is putting the finishing touches to a rich satin gown the old lady intends wearing if she appears at the fêtes at Grayfriars.

"Well, I think the gown will look very nicely, and the cap also, my dear; it is quite a love of a cap. And now, Eve, how about your black lace dress that you sent to London for? Suppose you do not get it in time? I want you to look very nice."

"The dress will be here by to-morrow night. I asked a young friend of mine at Madame's to send a few yards of pale blue satin for bows and loops—a blue that is almost white in its delicate tint. I don't like deep colours. But why do you wish me to look nice, aunt? They will be all strangers to me there."

"There may be some of them worth pleasing. That Mr. Evelyn, for instance, you have been talking about."

"Oh! I don't think Mr. Evelyn judges people by their dress," Eve answers, turning her great grey eyes with an expression of surprise on the old lady's face.

"He is somebody, I can tell you! The gardener tells me that Mr. Evelyn is head man up yonder till Lord Steyne comes."

Eve blushed a little, and laughed a little, and let her head drop a little.

"You will look very pretty if that black lace dress comes. And suppose, Miss Dora—I mean Mrs. Bartlett—sends the necklace she promised you. Why, Miss Carry will be awfully jealous! I like to see that young lady jealous! Her eyes snap at you so, and she looks so spiteful, that she quite amuses me!"

"I don't think the old lady will send the necklace. She'll forget all about it. Why should she trouble about me, a stranger?"

"Oh, yes, she will. Miss Dora is the wrong sort to say a thing and not mean it! She soon left the Hollyhocks, any way. Clarke says she went off this morning in a regular tantrum."

"What about, aunty?"

"Well, I don't blame her, even if she is down in the world. I don't see why she should put up with their sneers and disrespect. She has taken quite a fancy to you, Eve."

"And I think I should like the old lady very much."

"My lady was in a fine temper when she drove her to the station."

"I think Lady Bantem and the young ladies very vulgar, auntie!"

Mr. Evelyn left Muddlesboro' for London on the morning of the same day on which Lord and Lady Steyne were expected at Grayfriars.

The same evening a close carriage drove from the big house to the railway station, and returned shortly after, followed by two carriages full of servants and luggage.

There were two triumphal arches across the road to the Hollyhocks. But there was no demonstration, out of respect for Lord Steyne, who made his wishes known on the subject.

Those who chanced to catch a glimpse of Lady Steyne said that she looked very old, with snow-white hair, large kind blue eyes, and a sweet smile.

The improvements, alterations, and renovations at Grayfriars are complete. The workmen have disappeared from the scene, and with them Mr. Evelyn.

The ancient home of the De Veres has been refurnished, repainted, and redecorated in the modern high art style.

The noble old park is turned into a pleasure-ground. The flower-beds are radiant, the foliage dense and heavy, the close-shaven

grass like velvet pile, and the red and white tops of the marques gleam under the trees, while merry voices from the tennis-lawn, and peals of laughter from a group of pretty girls in quaint costumes as they chat or flirt with those stalwart youths in picturesque flannels lounging about the grounds, all signify that there is a merry company at quaint old Grayfriars.

The rector is the first of the local gentry who calls upon Lady Steyne, for Lord Steyne is not to be seen. His lordship is indisposed, the reverend gentleman is told.

Lady Steyne, active and energetic, despite her seventy odd years, moves about among her guests grave and stately. But his lordship has not yet been seen by the household. They know he has arrived, because his magnificent valet moves about with swift, velvety steps.

He is an Italian, and his name is Betini, and he evidently wishes to impress all beholders with a sense of his dignity. He has impressed them—all except two saucy young housemaids, who have the audacity to laugh outright at his grand airs and bad English.

### CHAPTER XIII.

The Misses Bantems' dressing-room presented a strange scene of litter and confusion a few mornings after the arrival of Lady Steyne.

Several packing-cases had arrived from London laden with bonnets and dresses for the ladies of the Hollyhocks. Even Eve came in for her share of the good things.

A small square bag, directed to Miss Morrison, contained the black lace dress so anxiously expected; and beneath the lace dress found a leather case, on opening which the girl was quite dazzled by the contents.

Aunt Dora had kept her word, and sent the pearls. And as Eve saw them gleaming in their satin bed, she could not believe them to be imitation; but she was no judge, therefore could not be certain. Enough for Eve that they were exquisitely lovely, and were quite good enough for a royal princess to wear—even though they were imitation.

Eve did not show her dress or pearls to anybody. But the Misses Bantems had sent for her to look over their things, and tell them what she thought of them.

The contents of the cases were scattered on the tables, couches, and carpets, Carry uttering the most extravagant exclamations of surprise and delight as she held them up for inspection.

"Oh, *Jet*! Here's bonnets! Look at those bonnets, and these gloves! I have half a mind to ask the Stewart girls to look at them if they call to-day. Would you, Jo, if you were me?"

"No, certainly not!"

"You are disagreeable, Jo!"

"And you are tiresome, Carry."

"What a pity Aunt Dora's gone!"

"I didn't mind Aunt Dora. She was bearable if people studied her a little!"

"Who was going to study a disagreeable old thing like her?" Carry retorts, with a saucy, sidelong glance at her sister, who is surveying herself in the long mirror in a charming new gown of steel grey crêpe de chine that fits her very full figure like a skin. It is made on the scientific dressmaking principle.

Carry is arraying her more graceful figure in a similar gown.

The room door opens, and Lady Bantem appears, radiant in a brown and gold combination.

"You are most impertinent, Carry! Aunt Dora constantly complained of your impertinence while she was here. If she mentioned it before your pa there would be a row!" gasps her ladyship, who had opened the door in time to hear her favourite daughter's words.

"Well, ma, am I to put up with a nasty cross old thing, always finding fault with me? Jo is sly, ma! She didn't say any smart things to Aunt Dora; but she sat and sulked, and looked black at her all the time. And so did you, ma!" says the young lady, with charming candour, as she adjusts a posy of

hot-house flowers at her throat.

"Eve, would you like any of these wings or tips for your hat; they are very pretty?" Carry asks the girl, who is arranging the drapery on her skirt.

"No, thank you, Miss Carry. Bright colours do not suit me."

"But there are white and grey, and pale blue, and mauve colour. You may have which you like, Eve. You are going to the tenants' fete, are you not?"

"Yes, Miss Carry, if my aunt goes. But I have a hat already trimmed that will do for the occasion; besides, I never wear birds, or any portion of birds for trimming."

"Why not?"

"I consider it cruel! It encourages cruelty to the poor birds."

"Cruelty to the birds! What a fad!" "Now, girls, are you ready? We'll be so late calling upon Lady Steyne!" Lady Bantem interrupts, in a voice that sounded as though she were half asphyxiated.

Jo moves with a dignified air from the room, Carry tripping with lighter steps behind her.

"I'll tell you all about Lord and Lady Steyne when I come back, Eve," she says, looking back from the door at the dressmaker girl, who is looking after the three fashionably attired ladies as they sail majestically from the room, on their way to make their first call on the De Veres of Grayfriars.

Eve Morrison hurries to the window that looks out on the broad carriage sweep in front of the portico.

She sees the three ladies step into the Victoria, the majestic footmen in blue and silver liveries, and the high stepping bays as the coachman gives them their head, and they start down the drive at a rattling pace.

Eve turns away from the window with a sigh, it might be of relief, that she was released for a while from the young ladies' silly chatter; or it might be a sigh of regret at the contrast in their positions.

Taking up her hat that lay on a chair, she went out in the corridor, and down a flight of stairs, avoiding that part of the house where she might be likely to meet her aunt, she made her way to the side entrance—the same door by which she admitted herself when she parted so abruptly from Mr. Evelyn a few evenings ago.

She opened this door and passed out, closing it behind her, and walked swiftly up the shady lane leading to the high road.

The girl looks paler and graver, and there are circles under the large grey eyes, as if she had not slept much.

At the corner of the road she paused, looking up and down.

From where she stands she can see along the road to the spot where Mr. Evelyn assaulted Charles Bantem for insulting her.

She knew that the latter had gone to London, so she need not fear meeting him; but the latter, where was he? She had not seen him since that awful evening.

"I must not go any farther," she says, softly. "If I should happen to meet him he might think that it was intentional on my part."

Two men are coming from opposite directions along the road. They meet, and hail each other at a little distance from Eve's standpoint.

"Hi, Jim! where be you off to now?" exclaims number one.

"I bin up to the big 'ouse to see Mustel Hevlyn; but they tell me 'e's gone to Lunnon," answers number two.

"Ee's. 'Ee's gone to Lunnon," assents number one.

"Ain't he a-coming back no more?" queries number two.

"I heard not," says number one.

Eve hears no more. She turns away, feeling sick and giddy. This, then, is the end. Mr. Evelyn's engagement at Grayfriars was concluded, and he had gone back to London to return no more.

As Eve inserted the latchkey in the side-door she pressed one hand to her forehead, and murmured with pale lips—

"What a fool I've been! What a fool I've been!"

The ex-Mayoress of Muddlesboro' and her charming daughters have been duly received by the Lady of Grayfriars. In short, Lady Steyne's reception of Lady Bantem has been so gracious that the latter, inflated by a new sense of importance, on leaving Grayfriars, orders her coachman to drive to Lady Margaret Stewart's, in order to submit her equipage and her own and her daughter's toilette to the inspection and envy of that noble and impudent ladies were in the drawing-room.

The drawing-room at the Stewart's cottage orate was famous for its refined luxury and art decorations. To-day it looks charming, with its old oak furniture and bric-a-brac, and countless souvenirs of past greatness. Every available spot is filled with sweet summer blooms, that make the air heavy with fragrance.

Lady Margaret and her daughters had called upon Lady Steyne on the previous day, and had been introduced to some of the guests at Grayfriars.

Two of the fashionable men from London had just called upon the Stewarts, a few minutes before the Bantems arrived.

These two men were Major Gurney, of the Blankshire Regiment, and young Clayton, of the Blues, a handsome stripling, and the only son of a millionaire.

The Major is a fine, soldierly man, with a magnificent coal-black beard and splendid black eyes.

He is a man with a long line of ancestors, and more blue blood in his veins than money in his pocket.

Major Gurney has been the pet of the West-end drawing-rooms for several seasons, his one idea being that he must retrieve his tottering fortunes by marriage. He must marry money—that is his only chance.

But, though he had many flirtations, and many maidens rich and fair had smiled upon him, yet they all jilted him, or some other fellow stepped in and bore off the coveted prize, leaving the Major in the lurch.

A few weeks prior to his visit at Grayfriars, a young lady to whom he was paying marked attention threw him over for a rich City man. He was just recovering from the disappointment and mortification consequent on the false one's treachery, when he met his young friend, Fred Clayton, of the Blues, at Brooks'.

Young Clayton, touched by the Major's despondency, insisted upon him accompanying him to his father's house to dinner. One of the guests on that occasion was Lord Steyne, who invited Fred Clayton to Grayfriars, and extended the invitation to his friend.

This is how Major Gurney came to be at Grayfriars; and the Major was a most desirable addition to the housewarming revels at the ancient home of the De Veres.

Among the men he was acknowledged to be the best fencer, the best rider, the best rower, the best billiard, football, and cricket player; among women, the best dancer, the best talker, the best lawn-tennis player.

On the day previous to Lady Bantem's visit to Lady Margaret Stewart, the latter, with her daughters, had called upon Lady Steyne. At Grayfriars they met, and were introduced to Major Gurney and Fred Clayton, when both men seemed greatly charmed with the young ladies.

Fred Clayton was most profuse in his praise of the younger sister, Ethel, who was about his own age. His friend preferred the elder sister, Lilian.

"Ah, dear boy, if I only had a Crossus for a father like you, I would propose to Lilian at once. But she is not for me—she is not for me. She must look out for a rich husband, as I must look out for a rich wife!"

Lady Margaret's guests were scattered in little groups through the pretty bijou drawing-

man when Lady Bantem and the Misses Bantem were announced.

Dressed in what some time had been a costly black lace gown, Lady Margaret looked as she always did, a perfect gentlewoman, and received the ex-Mayoress of Muddlesboro' with the air of a grand duchess—an air of which her portly visage carried her most heartily—an air which that lady could never hope to acquire, and which her fabulous wealth could not buy.

Lady Margaret introduced the new arrivals to those of her guests whom she did not know, then made room for Lady Bantem on the low couch beside herself, that lady being too much overcome by the heat to be able to talk much.

"You called upon Lady Steyne yesterday? What do you think of her?" she managed to gasp, as she mopped her hot face with a wisp of white lace that stood proxy for a handkerchief.

"Think of her, Lady Bantem! I assure you that Lady Steyne is the most high-bred, as well as the best-dressed woman I have met for many years. And she has passed nearly all her life at the Antipodes; and we English look upon them out there as semi-savages! Ah, the late Lord Steyne knew what he was doing when he married the miner's widow!"

"So I think. Lady Steyne is most charming!"

"Yes; she is a beautiful old lady, whose heart will be always young, no matter how many years she may live. And as for her toilet, it is perfect, though simple. She seems surrounded by an aroma of wealth. The very swish of her gown reminds one of the rustle of bank-notes."

Lady Margaret fanned herself gracefully, and following the direction of Lady Bantem's eye to where the young people sat in two groups.

Ethel Stewart is looking over a book of engravings, while Fred Clayton has a good view of them from behind her chair, if he cared to look; but he is watching the delicate outline of her profile, and inhaling the faint perfume of her silky, pale-brown hair.

Josephine Bantem, looking fat and good-natured, and as handsome as a handsome and marvelously-fitting gown can make her, sits near them, regarding what she considers a new fixation with complacent amiability.

Not far from this group Lilian Stewart is seated, plying her needle with swift, white fingers. She is embroidering something in a frame with many-coloured silks. There is an equal colour in the girl's fair cheeks, for she feels that Major Gurney's big black eyes are fixed on her face.

Carry Bantem sits beside her, and the Major's attention is divided between them. Lilian he seems to admire very much, while he seems very anxious to please the younger Miss Bantem.

That young lady is in good spirits and perfect good humour with herself. She knows that she is not beautiful, but she also knows that she is not quite bad-looking; her figure is passable, not so full as her sister's, but just plump enough to set off a well-made gown. She is young. That is half the battle, she tells herself, for youth is always fair to see, however plain. She is rich. How often in this world do riches stand proxy for youth and beauty! How few gaps are there in some lives that may not be filled with gold!

Carry Bantem felt that she was richly and beautifully dressed, and that the contrast between her own toilet and that of Lilian Stewart was very striking, though that young lady looks lovely and lovable in a gown of creamycoloured cloth, trimmed with imitation lace.

The artist eye might rest longer on the graceful folds of the oatmeal cloth, but to a man who knew the world, like Major Gurney, a rich gown and its accompaniments were the outward signs of wealth; and, with an eye to his own interests, he resolved to know more about the Bantems.

Lady Bantem and her daughters soon took

leave of Lady Margaret and her daughters and guests, and were attended to their carriage by Major Gurney.

Carry spoke in raptures of him during their drive homeward. It was something for her to receive attention from such a handsome man—an officer and a gentleman, with a long line of ancestors behind him!

When the Major returned to the drawing-room he went straight to where Fred Clayton and Ethel Stewart were sitting.

"Who are those people?" he asks, bending over the young lady's chair.

"You mean the Bantems?" she answers, without looking up from the book of engravings on her lap. "They are very nice people, and enormously rich."

"Very nice! Ni import. Rich! They possess the open sesame. I need not ask if they are nobodies, if one meets them in Lady Margaret's drawing-room!"

"Oh, they are not somebodies! They are very good people for parvenus. Sir Giles was knighted while occupying the civic chair, and Lady Bantem was heiress to a large fortune made in trade," says Lady Margaret, who had overheard the conversation between her daughter and the Major.

"But they are so stuck-up, mamma!" observes the young lady.

"Well, like all self-made people, they are over-anxious to be good form in all things, and commit some amusing blunders in consequence. But I don't dislike them," Lady Margaret says, patronizingly, as Major Gurney recalls the Bantem carriage, with its high-steppers and handsome liveries.

He had resolved to try his fascinations on widows in future, but he had changed his mind within the last half-hour.

A few minutes later the two men took their leave of the ladies, and left the house arm-in-arm.

"Well, Fred, what do you think of the younger Miss Bantem?" the Major asks, between the pugs of his cigar.

"What do I think of her? Why, think—er—that she's a stunner! You should go in for Miss Carry, Gurney. If I had seen her before I had fallen head over ears in love with Ethel Stewart, I would now be a candidate for her hand!"

"And fortune—eh?"

"No, I wouldn't think of her fortune. She is just the jolly, breezy sort of girl I like."

"You see, you can afford to marry a portly wife; I cannot," observes the Major, regretfully.

"Then place yourself at the head of the list of Miss Carry's admirers."

"They are parvenus—self-made people, while I am a rather obscure offshoot of the old nobility."

"Don't you think the parvenus are the best nowadays? They keep the best tables, the best cellars, the best horses, of any people we meet."

"Then you think Miss Carry—er—might be bearable as a wife for a fellow like me?"

"Certainly. She is stylish and accomplished, and will have a handsome dot when she marries. Just give her her head, and for all the time you will pass in the society of your wife I think she may be endurable."

"Then I'll think about it."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

The next day a handsome brougham, bearing the Steyne arms, and drawn by a pair of high-stepping greys, turns into one of the iron gates of the Hollyhocks, rolls along the broad, smooth carriage-drive, and stops before the shallow portico steps of the big, unlovely pile of bricks and mortar that is looked upon by the good people of Muddlesboro' as a palatial modern mansion.

Swift as an athlete, the footman descends from his seat beside the coachman, and tripping up the steps, meets one of the Bantem footmen in the doorway, to whom he hands his lady's card.

The gorgeous creature in plush and powder takes the pasteboard talisman and passes it to one of his fellows, who places it on a silver waiter and disappears up the front staircase in search of Annie, the ladies' maid, who took the note to Lady Bantem, who was in the dressing-room with her daughters, to whom her ladyship was reading a letter just received from their London modiste.

"Oh, ain't our dresses lovely! Quite too lovely for anything! Don't you think so, Jo?" Carry is saying.

"Yes, they are stylish—very!"

"And ain't it jolly that Major Gurney is so attentive? He is quite gone upon me!"

"But, Ma—"

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt, Carry!"

"But, Ma, ain't you awfully glad that old Aunt Dora has left? How good of her to go before the fates! Horrid old thing!" persisted Carry.

"Yes, I am glad Aunt Dora is out of the way. Why, that black gown of hers must have been made quite ten years ago! Besides, if she stayed here there would have been trouble with your Pa, if he heard you saucy to her."

"Well, she's a regular old fright! Suppose Major Gurney or Mr. Clayton were to see her!"

"Major Gurney is quite good form as an acquaintance, but not quite so desirable as a husband for a young lady with a dowry of fifty or sixty thousand pounds, and other expectations."

"You mean great expectations, Ma."

"What! visitors, Annie? Who is it? Good gracious! it is Lady Steyne! And I a fright like this, too! How do I look, Jo? Nice, do you say? I'm sure I don't; I am quite flushed and rumpled, all through coming in here. What a litter you have made the place in! I'm at home, Annie! Tell Hobbes to show the lady into the drawing-room. Jo and Carry, are you both coming down?"

"I'll come, Ma," Jo says, laying aside some dainty fabric she had been stitching.

"I don't care to see Lady Steyne. Now, if Lord Steyne had called it would be different," Carry observes, with a saucy toss of her head.

"I must not look flurried," Lady Bantem remarks, as she leaves the room, followed by Josephine, both ladies arranging the drapery on their skirts like tropical birds shaking out their plumage.

As the frou-frou of their gowns die out along the corridor, Carry hears a tap at the door, and, looking up from her novel, sees Eve Morrison standing in the doorway. The sunbeams, pouring through the tall windows, shine radiantly on the slim figure in the clinging gown of pale blue cambric, lighting up the golden hair and fair, flower face with more than usual beauty. Carry never saw a face so lovely before. The noon sun seemed to glorify it, though Eve looked very grave, and her habitual sweet smile does not play about the lips or eyes to-day.

"Oh!" exclaimed Carry, with a start. "Is it you, Miss Morrison? Come in. Can I find you some sewing? Well, yes, I daresay I can find you something to do, so can my sister, when she comes back. Lady Steyne has called, and my sister and mamma are gone down to receive her. How well you look to-day, Eve! You won't mind me calling you Eve, will you? It may be the sunlight upon your face. Just stand out of the sun. No; it makes no difference. You do look well! You ought to marry well, Eve. Somebody ever so well off will come on the scene and marry you for your own sake, while somebody else will marry me for my money. It is sad!"

"Well, Miss Carry, you ought never marry anybody unless you loved him, whether he be rich or poor. I wouldn't!" But Carry did

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not either hear or heed her. She let her head drop in her hands, and was weeping silently, the tears trickling through her fingers and falling on the open book on her lap.

"Well, don't cry about it, Miss Carry. You must not marry a man who wants you for your money, you know," Eve says, with a little laugh that displays her beautiful lips and teeth.

"But how am I to know?" says Carry.

"I think you ought to be able to guess whether he wants yourself or your money."

"I know a gentleman, now, that I could love so dearly, though we are almost strangers. I don't think he knows whether I have money or not, and I don't want him to. He has been very nice and attentive to me, but ma won't hear of me encouraging him. Oh, it's so dreadful to be rich!"

"You wouldn't care to be poor, even for the man you love, Miss Carry. Believe me, there is no trouble in this world so hard to bear as poverty. What would you do, Miss Carry, without your servants and carriages, horses and jewels, and fine dresses, balls and parties? You would not like it."

"Perhaps not. Ah, that is Jo's voice. They are coming back."

"Then I shall go, Miss Carry, and come back again presently, when her ladyship is gone."

Eve went out of the room, and Carry wiped her flushed and tear-stained face just as her mother sailed majestically in, closely followed by Josephine. Mother and daughter looked disconcerted and annoyed.

"To think that I could be so easily imposed upon! To think that I had so little discernment, or knew no better! Well, to be sure!"

"What's the matter, ma?"

"Carry, I shall never forgive you! Your impertinence is quite too dreadful for anything!"

"And your insinuations, ma, are quite too dreadfully obscure! I don't know what you mean by my impertinence, ma!"

"I mean your impertinence to Aunt Dora!"

"Aunt Dora again, ma? Why, you'll have Aunt Dora on the brain! What of Aunt Dora now?"

"Lady Steyne called just now, hoping to find Aunt Dora here. I was aware that they had met in New Zealand—I thought only as casual acquaintances—but, according to Lady Steyne, Aunt Dora is the dearest friend she has in the world. Aunt Dora did not tell me that when she was here, or I should have acted different. Lady Steyne does not believe in her poverty. She thinks she must have been acting, that she is not poor. Just fancy me not seeing through it all! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"And what are you going to do now, ma?" Carry asks, in dismay.

"Well, Lady Steyne asked me to give her Aunt Dora's London address, and she would go up to town and call upon her old friend; but I told her I had not heard from Aunt Dora, and did not know which of her friends she is staying with. How do I know where your Aunt Smith has packed the silly old thing to? Of course, I had to tell Lady Steyne that we are all very fond of Aunt Dora, and awfully sorry that she wouldn't stay with us!"

"And, ma, you told Lady Steyne that your youngest daughter, Carry, was most particularly fond of Aunt Dora!" Josephine says, sulkily.

"Oh, ma, how could you!" protests Carry.

"What can you do, ma?" inquires Josephine.

"Don't worry, child! I must go up to town quietly one day this week; go to your Aunt Smith's, find Aunt Dora, take her to Jay's, and get her an outfit of deep mourning—their very best, no matter what it costs! Then she must come back to the Hollyhocks. I'll tell Lane to have the south bedroom prepared for her."

"That is if you can manage Aunt Dora, ma!"

#### CHAPTER XV.

There was a dinner party at Grayfriars, to which all the best families in the locality were invited. The most part were in London for the season, but the few who remained at their country houses availed themselves of the invites to Grayfriars.

Among these were the Bantems and the Stewarts.

Charley Bantem was still in town. He has remained there since the day following his humiliating encounter with Mr. Evelyn, and so did not put in an appearance at the hospitable board of the De Veres.

The dinner was a sumptuous affair, the hostess handsome and genial—both a grand social success.

Lady Steyne is a wonderful woman at seventy years of age; she is the life and soul of society. Her vigour, activity, high spirits, and conversational powers are unabated, and she charms alike the young and the old of both sexes.

Grayfriars is full of visitors; every available room is occupied. Major Gurney and his friend Clayton are still under that hospitable roof. The latter carries on a mild flirtation with Ethel Stewart, the progress of which is watched with secret satisfaction by Lady Margaret.

Major Gurney's attentions to Carry Bantem have become more marked—in fact, the gallant officer has become her shadow.

The pair are seldom seen apart. They are to be met along the sequestered walks and green glades of Grayfriars, or sauntering along the dusty roads and leafy lanes beyond the park palings—he in his check suit and grey deerstalker, she in her gay summer gown and fashionable bonnet, skewered to her bunched-up hair with golden stiletto, flitting her white parasol as expressively as a Spanish donna does her fan.

"She will have a nice dot when she marries, and a heap of money when her father dies," he thought. "I shall stick to her, and I'll propose to her as soon as I can do so with any show of decency. I hope it won't end in a smash-up, like all the others."

At the dinner-party the Bantem girls were conspicuous for their charming gowns and costly ornaments. And Lady Bantem, if not very aristocratic, was very impressive-looking in her rich gown of dark heliotrope brocade. And Major Gurney had much faith in those outward signs of wealth and condition.

The Monday following the dinner-party was fixed for the garden-party at Grayfriars, and the Thursday following in the same week would be the tenants' fête day, and on the same night there would be a grand ball in Lady Steyne's sumptuous and spacious rooms. In the week following the ball Lady Steyne would go up to town for the remainder of the season, when she assured Lady Bantem that she would do her very utmost to find her dear old friend, Mrs. Bartlett, and bring her back to Grayfriars.

"I must be beforehand with you, my lady. I'll go up to town the day after to-morrow, and hunt up Aunt Dora," Lady Bantem told herself, as she took leave of her hostess on the night of the dinner-party.

"Oh, Eve! I am so pleased to see you! It is so thoughtful of you! I want to ask you to help dress me. My sister and Ma are quite enough for Annie. Besides, she has no idea of dressing a lady. I wish you would do my hair, Eve—bunched up on top of my head, you know. Major Gurney admires that style of coiffure, and I wish to humour him."

"I'll dress you with pleasure, Miss Carry."

"You are going to the fête next Thursday, are you not?" Carry asks, with a quizzical sideway glance at Lane's niece, as she stands where the sunbeams from the window fall on the carpet, glorifying the golden hair and fair face.

"I think so," Miss Carry; "I wrote to Madame for permission to stay here until Friday next."

I received an answer from Miss Pym, our fine-hand milliner, this morning."

"The permission is granted, of course?"

"Well, Madame is very good. She is put to some inconvenience through me being absent from business. It is the wrong time of year to take my holidays. It is the height of the London season, and we usually take our holidays in the slack time. But, as I was ill, Madame thought I might as well take mine now as later on. But here is Miss Pym's letter; you may read it, Miss Carry." And Eve draws a letter from her dress pocket, and hands it to the young lady, who is seated to have her hair dressed.

She glanced over the letter. There were four pages, three of them crossed, and written in a large, bold, firm hand.

The perusal seemed to amuse her very much; and when Josephine came into the room Carry asked Eve if she might read the letter to her elder sister.

"Just listen to this, Jo!"

"My dear, dear Eve,—

"I am desired by Madame to write and tell you that you may have the four days on condition that you return to London on Friday night next at the latest; and I must congratulate you, my dear Eve, on being such a favourite with Madame to win such concession as that from her. I hope you are enjoying yourself."

"I send the black lace dress by the parcel post. The light blue satin is the palest we have in stock, dear. How nice you will look in black lace and pale blue satin! and how I should like to be there to dress you, Eve!"

"I send you such a lovely dot of a bonnet in black lace and jet; and I send a box of forget-me-nots to trim it. So your bonnet will match your gown, and suit your complexion. No strings, you know."

"You can't think, Eve, darling, how I miss you! Though it's the height of the London season, and carriages are stopping at the door all day from twelve to four, Madame is awfully cross, I can tell you, on account of your being away. The men who come here escorting their mothers, sisters, wives, or sweethearts look so utterly spiritless and wretched that the ladies go away without buying anything, or even giving an order, because they want to get the miserable fellows out of the place."

"They come here to stare at you, and not seeing you causes them to slide into the first stage of melancholy. They mope about the show-room, they stare at me, they stare at the open door, as if they expect somebody they are in search of to appear. They stare in the mirrors, they pull their moustaches, they nibble the tips of their gloves, and look limp and stupid generally."

"Young Lord Staunton came here the other day with that dashing little pest, the Hon. Mrs. Vane-Tracy—you know who I mean. She always has men with her, and is a regular slave-driver. The young lord carried her poodle and parasol, and I spoke to the dog, and twitted him on the nose, while my lady selected some fancy goods. So his lordship continued to whisper in my ear, 'Er—has that pretty gal with the golden hair got—er—maimed, or left?'

"So you see, my dear Eve, that you are missed greatly in Bond Street. You ought to marry well, if you play your cards well. I know you were born to be a lady. If so, you must have me for your sewing-woman, and take me away from Bond Street for evermore. With best love, my dear Eve, I remain your true friend,

"HESTER PYM."

"Poor Hester! she is so good to me!" says Eve, laughing gaily.

"Has your dress and bonnet come yet?" Carrie asks.

"Oh, yes; last night."

"I suppose they look very pretty?" this in a tone of envy.

"I haven't looked at them yet, Miss Carry."

"How can you bear the suspense? I should be dying to see them—wouldn't you, Jo?"

"There is no suspense to bear. I don't think of them."

"Good gracious! What a high old time you milliners in Bond Street must have!"

"You will speak slang!" Josephine interupted.

"Yes, I will, Miss Goody-goody. I like slang."

Your hair looks nice, Miss Carry. Your dress next, and then your bonnet. It is a lovely toilet! It is such a perfect pink! and your parasol is very dainty. Those garlands of rosebuds have a most charming effect!"

"Yes, my bonnet and parasol are quite too lovely for anything!" gushes Carry, as she views herself in the long mirror, while Josephine has the room to finish dressing, feeling much annoyed lest her sister will look better than herself, though their toiletts are just alike.

A few hours later Eve was strolling under the sycamores, feeling very lonely and dejected, for she was thinking of Mr. Evelyn, whom she had not seen for several days—Mr. Evelyn, who had not made any attempt to see or write to her. The excitement of Lord and Lady Steyne's arrival had, no doubt, quite driven her out of his thoughts.

"He is false!" she tells herself. "But what does it matter? I will go away next Friday, and I, too, will forget, and it will be over and done with!"

Her reverie is interrupted by the sound of wheels upon the smooth drive.

The Bantems have returned from the garden-party at Grayfriars.

Carry spies the tall, slim figure moving slowly in the distant shadow of the trees, and before the horses come to a standstill, she jumps from the carriage, and hurries after Eve's niece across the dusty lawn.

"Oh, Eve! wait for me! I want to tell you something! The garden-party was splendid, and Lord Steyne is the most delightful man I ever met; but, best news of all, Major Gurney has proposed, and asked me if he may speak to Pa! So, if Pa lets me marry him, I'll be just the happiest girl in the world!"

#### CHAPTER XVI.

Thursday dawned at last—a glorious day at Grayfriars.

The sun shone resplendent, and the flowers bloomed, and the leaves quivered in the golden light.

A tumultuous murmur of voices mingle with the braying of brass bands. Throngs of people keep pouring through the gates, from the well-to-do farmer to the humbler class of passersby. From far and near they come, dressed in their best, to do honour to the new Lord of Steyne.

Groups of fashionable men move among the people, or laugh and make merry while they dispense Lord Steyne's hospitality to his tenantry.

Stylish and beautiful women gather at the open windows or in the porch, or occupy garden-chairs on the lawn.

Coloured lamps gleam among the trees and shrubs. When the sun sets they will compete with the moon to make night brilliant at Grayfriars.

There are some fine specimens of young men and womanhood among the sons and daughters of the farmers and cottagers.

Lord Steyne has been among them, and made a short speech in acknowledgment of their reception, when the sentiments he expressed, and the promises he made to study their welfare, immediately won their hearts.

Lady Steyne moves about among her guests, slowly, but not feebly.

She is truly a beautiful old lady, as Lady Margaret Stewart described her. Majestic and graceful as a queen, her pale, serene face framed in silvery white hair that is beautiful and abundant. Her eyes, light blue, are large and expressive, and seem to have lost but little of their fire. A Marie Stuart cap of soft crepe gives effect to her appearance.

She has laid aside her deep mourning today, and wears black Chantilly lace over black satin; and, whatever may have been said of her parvenu origin, the stamp of ladyhood is on every movement of the new mistress of Grayfriars.

The girls thoroughly enjoyed themselves; and Eve, who has been walking with Lord Steyne, involuntarily lets go her hold on her companion's arm just as Carry Bantem, arrayed in Indian muslin and cream lace, and leaning on Major Gurney's arm, stand full in their path. For one moment Carry glares upon Eve and her companion. All brightness and colour fades out of Carry's face, and her small, dark eyes flash with an evil light.

"Who thought of meeting you round here?" the Major asks, lifting his hat courteously.

Mr. Evelyn laughed. Eve looked from one to the other in surprise. Carry scowls darkly at her.

"Do you know who you are walking with, Miss Morrison?"

"Yes; Mr. Evelyn."

"Mr. Evelyn! What an innocent you are! Do you pretend not to know that this gentleman is Lord Steyne? Good gracious, my lord!" she adds, swinging round, and facing Eve's companion, "your lordship must have mistaken this young person for one of Lady Steyne's guests! She is no lady. She is staying at our house, on a visit to Mrs. Lane, our housekeeper, whose niece she is. I am so sorry, my lord, that this should happen!"

"Oh, Miss Carry, Miss Carry, I didn't know!" Eve moaned, in deepest anguish, as she stepped back from the group, her hands clasped, her face white as death, and her large eyes staring in horror.

Philip de Vere, Viscount Steyne, who had been masquerading among his own workpeople and tenantry for several weeks as Mr. Evelyn, was rendered so stupefied by Carry Bantem's cruel words that he was deprived of the power of speech or action for several seconds. He heard Eve's words, and he caught sight of her white face as she turned and fled from the spot. And still Carry Bantem rattled on indignantly about people not keeping in their proper station, and the presumption of servants and low people.

"What have you done, Miss Bantem? You have so terrified that poor girl; there is no knowing what may happen to her. How could you insult her so? Where has she gone to? Which way did she turn, Gurney? I was so astonished that I did not notice."

"Back the way you came, towards the lawn," and Lord Steyne turned on his heel, and hurriedly retraced his steps in search of the terrified girl.

"Er—my dear Carry, you—aw—are too hasty, you know—er. You ought not to speak to that young lady like that," the Major says, as he strokes his long bronze moustache.

"Young lady, indeed! Do you mean that dressmaker girl, Major Gurney?" sneers Carry.

"But he's awfully fond of her, you know—er—dead gone on her. She's awfully pretty—er. Hell never forgive you."

"What nonsense, Harry! Let us go on," Carry answers, snappishly. She is just realising her error, and her anger turns against herself, though she flirts her fan as if she didn't care.

"Let us hurry; mamma and Josephine will be waiting. We have to go home to dress for the ball!" And, laying her white-gloved hand on his arm, she marches him off.

With Carry Bantem's insults ringing in her ears, Eve Morrison hurries blindly along the smooth path, not slackening her pace until she emerges on the lawn. One quick glance shows her Lady Steyne, still sitting by the portico steps. She dare not look around or linger, lest her aunt should see and beckon to her. If she goes in search of her aunt, and begs her to take her back to the Hollyhocks, it will cause delay, and Lord Steyne will overtake her. Then will follow explanations that will result in much mortification and regret. She could

not control herself in his presence, and there would be a scene. She must get away quietly, and never set foot in Grayfriars again.

Her aunt and herself had driven over in the dog-cart, and the light wrap she wore was left in that vehicle, that is still waiting somewhere in the grounds. She cannot go in search of the dog-cart to get her wrap lest she might meet Lord Steyne. She must get back to the Hollyhocks, and never see him again.

She knows the Bantems must go home to dress for the ball. She must get there before them. She must go as she is, in her lace dress, with its unlined corsage and elbow-sleeves, and those great pearls gleaming about her throat and arms.

She moves swiftly between the groups on the lawn, all eyes following the graceful figure, until it is hidden from their view by the boles of the elms. The crash of brass instruments, and the sound of laughter, and the tumult of many voices, grows fainter and fainter. She knows of a private outlet from the grounds of Grayfriars, leading into the quiet lane running beside the Hollyhocks to the high road.

Eve soon reaches the private exit, and, having tied her pocket-handkerchief over her pearl necklace, passed out into the lane, turning in the direction of the side door to the Hollyhocks. On reaching this ivy-covered entrance, Eve was fortunate to find the door unfastened, and was able to reach her bedroom without meeting anybody. She quickly locked her door, and threw her pretty lace bonnet aside, and, flinging herself on the bed, sobbed as if her heart would break.

Such a storm of sobs, such a rain of tears! She does not like scenes or emotions, or startling effects, but she cannot help this outburst of sorrow. It is the last tribute to a fallen idol. They are the last sobs, the last tears, he will ever wring from her. The one man in all the world whom she believed she could love and honour had played her false. Knowing her to be a poor girl, he had won her heart by deception in concealing from her his real rank. She would never forgive him, never see him again, never think of him, she told herself.

"Yes, I will go to London to-night, if I can only get away before the ladies or my aunt return. I shall leave a note for auntie, asking her not to worry about me, and to send my box on. I shall be in time to catch the seven-fifteen train to St. Pancras, and send a telegram to Hester Pym to apprise her of my coming."

#### CHAPTER XVII.

With this resolve Eve started to her feet, tossing back her bright hair that had become loose, and fell in a glittering cloud about her shoulders. Being a very practical young person, she dried her tears, removed her pearl necklace and black lace gown, stuffing them ruthlessly in her box. She bathed her flushed face, and fastened up her hair in a golden pile. She then dressed herself in the grey gown, beaded black cape, and straw hat, trimmed with mauve satin, in which she travelled from London on that never-to-be-forgotten day on which she first met Mr. Evelyn. She next sat down to write a few lines to her aunt.

"Dear Auntie,—Something has occurred that compels me to go back to London to-night. Don't worry about me. I shall write to-morrow and explain all. Then, like a dear, good auntie, you will put my things in my box and send it on. Don't trouble about me, auntie, or be cross with your poor—Eve."

This she folded and put in an envelope, which she laid on the table in her aunt's room. Then, putting a few things in her black bag, and taking her white sunshade, she slipped out of the room and out of the house unobserved.

Eve Morrison reached the station without being recognised, and in time to despatch a telegram to Miss Pym at Bond Street, London, requesting that young lady to meet her at St. Pancras at 10.20 p.m.

Having procured a second-class ticket, she ensconced herself in a corner of the carriage, heaving a great sigh of relief as she did so. But it was not until the June dusk deepened into night, and the grey shadows crept over the corn and pasture-lands, and the "Lights o' Loudon" gave a lurid glow to the horizon, and the summer evening hum of the great city crept nearer, that the girl felt herself safe beyond the reach of her pursuers.

At eleven o'clock that night Lady Steyne retired, very much fatigued, leaving her guests to the full enjoyment of the music and dancing. Though feeling weary, she sent a servant in search of Lord Steyne. The new peer quickly obeyed the summons.

"Oh, Philip, is the girl really missing? Are you quite sure that she is not still at the Hollocks?"

"I am quite sure, mother. I sent two messengers. One says that Mrs. Lane found a note in her room, in which Miss Morrison asks her not to worry about her—that she was leaving for London to-night, and would send an explanation to-morrow. My other messenger learnt at the railway-station that a young lady answering her description had booked for London that evening."

"I shall never forgive Giles Bantem's daughter. The girl must be found, Philip. She is the only living descendant of my sister Helen and my second husband's sister Rose. Rose Hillary's son married Helen Bantem's daughter. Rose and Helen are dead, so are their son and daughter, but Eve, their grandchild, lives to inherit the money that would have been theirs had they been found. George Hillary left a large sum of money to his sister Rose and her descendants, so with what I shall give her Eve will be rich indeed. Strange that both advertisements and detectives failed to find her! Yet she is found here, after all, in the simplest way. And now the one desire of my heart is that you, Philip, will marry her."

"I will never marry any other woman, mother," Lord Steyne answers, solemnly.

"You have a severe account to render, Lane, for the way in which you have brought up your niece. Such airs and such notions! I don't wonder at Lord Steyne mistaking her for one of her ladyship's guests. There wasn't a lady there who looked more stylish than she did in that black lace gown. People ought to dress according to their position, Lane. I don't know what Lady Steyne would think of her if she knew she is only a dressmaker. Lord and Lady Steyne are going to London to-morrow for some weeks, so we shall go up to town to finish the season."

In these words Lady Bantem unburdened herself to the housekeeper the morning after the ball at Grayfriars, and Eve's flight.

"Just fancy, Ma! that designing minx walking with Lord Steyne and pretending not to know him! And those pearls she wore were real—Major Gurney says so, and he knows. The deceitful thing!" squeals Miss Carry, maliciously.

There is a crush of carriages in Hyde Park; the famous exercise-ground is still crowded, though it is the end of June, and the season begins to wane. Some of the old magnates have departed to other scenes, but they are not yet missed, except by their personal friends.

On this sunny June day the park is at its brightest; the flowers are radiant; the great, stately trees stand like a dusky wall, motionless, in the still air. A long line of carriages move slowly from Apsley Gate westward. Opposite the Albert Gate one equipage leaves the line, and drives towards the fashionable exit. The carriage contains four people—Sir Giles and Lady Bantem, Miss Bantem, and Mr. Charles Bantem.

"Yes, Giles, I told you from the first, and I tell you so now, that Aunt Dora is my *bête noir*, as Lady Margaret says; but we must take her up to please the De Veres. We can-

not offend them, if only for the dear girls' sake!" her ladyship is saying, in quite a flounce, and fanning herself violently, as the Victoria sweeps past the French Embassy, before which there is a well-dressed crowd watching the arrivals to a reception.

"Sensible woman, Lady Steyne; and as for Aunt Dora, she isn't so bad. Can you drive to what's-her-name, Em'ly, and see the—"

"Jay's Pa?" suggests Miss Jo.

"Ay, to be sure—Jay's! Well, can't we drive to Jay's and see one of the leading ladies, and explain what you require, Em'ly? Tell her that money is no object if she can make an old lady presentable who has lived at the other end of the earth during the last fifty years. If you only persuade Aunt Dora to come and stay with us a week or two, and get a lady from Jay's to call upon us to see what is required, we shall go on all right," Sir Giles advises, merrily.

That gentleman delivered himself of this speech while the Victoria is standing still, in consequence of a block in Knightsbridge.

"You must be very firm with Carry. She has been very impertinent to Aunt Dora, and she has offended Lord Steyne by insulting Lane's niece while in his company. I let her go to Richmond with Major Gurney to-day, because I could not take her to Lady Steyne's."

Here the carriage gets clear, and proceeds along Brompton Road without further hindrance until it stops before a modern mansion in the Cromwell-road.

Charles Bantem leaps out, and assists his parents and elder sister to alight. They ascend the broad steps, and pass through a group of servants in gorgeous livery, who are waiting in the hall. One of these gentlemen lead them to the drawing-room, and takes Lady Bantem's card to Lady Steyne.

"What a beautiful room! Her ladyship must be quite a patron of the high art decorations," observes Jo.

"Er—look at those Japanese monsters! Lady Steyne calls them her curios, I suppose, aw—lips Charley, with an affected air.

"Hideous monstrosities! Ah! there is Lord Steyne talking to me. You haven't been introduced yet, Chawley."

The heir of the Bantems turned and saw a tall gentleman, who had just entered the room, and was in the act of shaking hands with Sir Giles and Lady Bantem.

He stood with his back to Chawley; but there was something in the back view of that figure that caused Chawley to start, and mentally ejaculate, "By Jove!" A minute later and the man turns, and Chawley steps back, muttering, "Dem it all!" most vehemently.

"My lord, my son Chawley has not yet had the honour of an introduction. Come Chawley, and be present—"

"No occasion, my dear Lady Bantem. We have met before; we already know each other. Do we not, Mr. Bantem?"

"Ye—s—s! er—aw—dem it all!"

"How do you do?" and he shook Chawley's hand warmly, while he smiles so reassuringly that Chawley's self-possession is quite restored, and, plucking up courage, he looks Lord Steyne in the face.

"Er—and to think that fellow I met in the railway carriage was Lord Steyne," he muses. Just then the drawing-room door opens, and a swirl of silken skirts heralds the entrance of Lady Steyne.

All eyes turn to behold the hostess standing in the doorway—tall, handsome, and distinguished-looking, despite her seventy years.

Sir Giles and Lady Bantem move towards her, and the lady advances to meet them half-way.

"My dear Lady Steyne—"

"My dear Sir Giles! Yourself and Lady Bantem are searching for your aunt, Mrs. Dora Bartlett, are you not?"

"Yes! and I think we shall be able—"

"To find her. She is already found. I am Aunt Dora!"

"Eh!"

"I am Aunt Dora!" Lady Steyne says, holding out both hands.

"Er—aw—by Jove! Here's a chestnut!" from Chawley.

"O ma, we are ruined!" from Josephine, as she staggers back.

Lady Bantem comprehends the situation; but she utters no sound as she sinks softly on the carpet, where she lies a helpless heap of quivering plush and sage-green brocade. Lord Steyne and Chawley raised her with some difficulty, and placed her on a couch, when Sir Giles bent over her and whispered,—

"Sit up, Em'ly! Don't be silly. You know it was all your fault. You would snub Aunt Dora."

"Have you no vinaigrette, Josephine? Here, take mine. Hold it to her nostrils; it will revive her if she inhales it. I would rather not summon the servants. Only my little plot, Giles!"

"I am sorry for all this, Lady Steyne. I am sorry you came amongst us in the guise of a poor relation."

"Were I the poorest creature on earth I was your father's sister. And your father and you had all the money myself and my sister Helen would have inherited at my father's death. Knowing how my sister and I had been treated, and being the possessor of four million dollars, I wished to know who were my friends and who my enemies. And I came to see if any descendants of my sister were living, or any relations of my second husband, George Hillary. He had an only sister, and that sister had an only son, who married my sister Helen's daughter; and the only child of that marriage is Eve Morrison, who has always believed herself to be Lane's niece, because she brought her up and educated her, as she did her mother before her.

"When Helen was a widow, and in poverty, she did not apply to you, Giles; she sought her old servant, who was just married. Lane gave her shelter until her death, and kept her child until she grew up and married; and when she died Lane took her baby and brought her up, and had her taught a business, that she might earn the bread of independence."

"Well, Aunt Dora, let bygones be bygones. You have heard that vulgar old saying that 'blood is thicker than water.'"

"Well, you know the reception I got at the Hollocks. But I don't regret it. Had I come there as the rich Lady Steyne I might not have found my precious Eve. Lord Steyne might not have seen her in time to save him from marrying some other woman. Philip, ask Eve to come here."

Lord Steyne raised the velvet portière at one end of the room, and disappeared behind it.

In a few moments he returned with Eve on his arm.

The girl looked surpassingly lovely, but cool and collected; a little deeper colour in her cheeks being the only visible effect of the ordeal she was passing through.

"This is my sister Helen's granddaughter."

"And my promised wife," Lord Steyne adds, proudly.

"And this is my dear adopted son, the son of my most lamented husband, Lord Steyne. As Mr. Johnson he had been Mr. Barthett's private secretary two years, bearing his exile and loss of rank and title without a murmur. He had such a high-bred air, and such elegant manners, I suspected that he was not what he seemed.

"His deep dejection also impressed me. It required much tact and caution to draw from him the secret of his rank. Then my husband died, leaving me very rich. Mr. Johnson remained my secretary until I became convinced that the best use I could put my money to would be to restore Lord Steyne to his proper rank in his native country, and take his son and heir from obscurity, and give him his place in the world."

"To do this I had to marry him, or my affectionate relatives would have had me placed in a lunatic asylum."

"My husband is dead; but his son is Lord Steyne, and will marry Eve Morrison. There is the luncheon bell, Giles. Let us go down." Sir Giles suffered himself to be led from the room without a word of comment. Lord Steyne gave his arm to Lady Bantem, now quite recovered, while Eve and Josephine fell to the lot of Chawly.

"My dear Eve, you take it all as cool as though you were born to the purple!" Josephine whispers to her new-found cousin.

"My dear Lady Margaret, how well you are looking! I feared you were lonely now your two daughters are married."

"Not at all, dear Lady Ingram. You see, the girls both married money, in the shape of Charles Bantem and Captain Clayton, of the Guards."

"Ah, yes; both so rich, you see. And the de Veres, Lady Margaret, what of them?" Lady Ingram inquires, with her charming society smile.

"Well, the Dowager lives in the most delightful seclusion, content to hear and read about her daughter-in-law's triumphs. Young Lady Steyne is quite a woman of fashion. Major Gurney has married Carry Bantem, and her father and Aunt Dora have given them a lot of money. Josephine is the old maid of the family!"

[THE END.]

## Facetiae

"WHAT shall we do to pass the time away?" asked one of three school young ladies. "Let's just giggle, as usual."

NATURE has given to men one tongue, but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak.

"Did your father give you a good start in life?" "Well, it was forcible, and the old man put his best foot forward when he did it."

A TALKATIVE man was trimming the beard of King Archelaus, and asked, "How shall I eat it?" "In silence," replied the king.

SOMEBODA says, "poets are declining." This is evidently a mistake. Every poet will tell you that it is the editors who are declining.

JACK: "Did you ever see a horse jump five feet over a fence?" Pat: "Oi've seen 'em jump four feet over. I didn't know that a horse ever had foive."

"Don't you like the book?" "No, the heroine is a most impossible creature." "Is that so?" "Yes, she doesn't appear to have a single gown of some simple material that enhanced, rather than hid her graceful figure!"

UNCLE PODUNK (shopping in town, to saleswoman): "How much for them socks?" Saleswoman: "Twenty-five cents apair." Uncle Podunk (putting his hand in his pocket): "All right. Gimme a pair." Saleswoman: "Yes, sir. Cash, here! C-a-a-a-h!" Uncle Podunk: "Thunder and mud, woman! Ye needn't holler it so done loud. I know it's cash here, an' ain't I feelin' for it as fast as I kin?"

WHAT was the trouble between Arabella and her young man, that they gave up the idea of marrying?" asked a former resident of Bushy. "Arabella was always techy," said the young lady's aunt, with impersonal calmness, "and that was the trouble—that and her being so literal. It's a terrible risky combination of qualities. They kept having hitches all along, but come Christmas time, Albert asked her right up and down what she wanted, for fear of making the wrong choice, and she said, 'You can give me enough candy to fill my slipper,' looking at him real coy. Well, her feet aren't as small as some, but that wasn't his idea; 'twas because he's generous, and not literal. He sent her a five-pound box, poor, dented critter, and she up and broke the engagement; and his little sister ate the candy—and enjoyed it, by what I hear."

SHE: "Mr. Highnote tells me he is cultivating his voice." He: "Yes; I saw him irrigating it early this morning."

TEACHER (in a grammar class): "Tommy, correct the sentence, 'I kissed Susan once.'" Tommy (promptly): "I kissed Susan twice."

"I AM going to visit the jail. There is a man I want to see there." "Is one all? I know about forty whom I should like to see there."

MRS. NEWRICH (bidding good-bye to her guests after her first reception): "I'm so sorry that the rain kept all our best people away!"

HER MAMMA: "Daughter, I am surprised that you would suffer a man to kiss you." Her Daughter: "But, mamma, it wasn't suffering."

PAT: "You say if I use one of these patent dampers I save half me coal?" Agent: "Exactly, sir; exactly." Pat: "Be gobs, I'll take two."

"I GUESS we should be amused if we could see ourselves as others see us." "But think how amused others would be if they could see us as we see ourselves."

INSURANCE EXAMINER: "And what did you say your grandmother died of?" Feminine Risk: "Why, I can't just remember; but I'm sure it wasn't anything serious."

MERCHANT (to applicant): "Do you think you know enough to assist me in the office?" Boy: "Know enough? Why, I left my last place because the boss said I knew more than he did."

THE WIDOW.—"I want a man to do odd jobs about the house, run on errands, one that never answers back, and is always ready to do my bidding." Applicant: "You're looking for a husband, ma'am."

MR. CAUDLE: "Doctor, I want you to put up a powerful sedative for my wife; give me the best specific for insomnia you know of." Doctor: "What's the matter? Can't she sleep?" "Yes, I think so; but I can't."

MRS. TRUSTIE: "I always knew that Mrs. Gossippe was a terrible talker; but I thought she was at least conscientious enough to tell the truth. Now I find that she is entirely untrustworthy." Mrs. Lustie: "Has she only just begun to talk about you?"

MOTHER: "You naught' boy! You've been fighting." Little Son: "No, mother." Mother: "How did your clothes get torn and your face get scratched?" Little Son: "I was trying to keep a bad boy from hurting a good little boy." Mother: "That was noble. Who was the good little boy?" Little Son: "Me."

AT THE CHEMIST'S.—"Got any almanacs?" "Here are two or three." "Can I use your telephone?" "Help yourself." "And have you a directory?" "You will find it on the other counter." "Well, I'd like a little piece of liquorice root for the baby." "Here you are." "Now, where can I dry my feet?" "Sorry, but the fire is out." "Fire out? Why, you are an imitation of a locomotive whistle that I made an involuntary rush to get on the other track."

A MAN once complained to three friends, an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman, that his servant broke a good deal of china. The matter-of-fact Englishman gave the short bit of practical advice: "Dismiss him." "Take it out of his wages," suggested the thrifty Scot. The objection to that was that the wages were less than the amount of the damage. The Irishman came to the rescue. "Then raise his wages," said he.

SHE met him at the kitchen door with a rolling-pin in her hand, and she brandished it menacingly. "Madam," he began. "Well, what do you want?" she demanded aggressively. "What are you snoppin' round here for?" "Madam," he explained, backing away. "I called to see if I could place an accident insurance policy on your husband; but, after seeing you, I am satisfied he is too great a risk."

WOMEN jump at conclusions and generally hit; Men reason things out logically and generally miss it.

A WOMAN never sees a baby without wanting to run to it; a man never sees a baby without wanting to run from it.

HE: "It is strange, dear, we cannot speak without quarrelling." She: "And yet, when we quarrel we don't speak."

"And how did you feel, Mr. Dulith, when the great iceberg hung over your ship?" "Perfectly cool, I assure you."

"CAN you use this?" timidly inquired the poet, as he laid a bundle on the desk. "I think I can," said the editor, affably. "I am just about to start a fire in the office."

PAT, for the first time at a hotel table, saw a boarder reach for the celery several times and placidly proceed to dispose of it. Pat gazed in dismay, and turned to his fellow countryman with: "Oi moi! he's sitin' the bokay!"

"YOUNG man," he said, solemnly, "what would you think if I should put an enemy into my mouth to steal away my brain?" "I would—hio—think, sir," hiccupped the young man, "that you were going to an unnecessary expense."

"MARIA," said Brown, after they had moved into their new house, "we have a spacious back yard that ought to be put to some use. Suppose you get some poultry?" "No, John." "But why not?" "If our neighbours want eggs let them buy them."

AN INSIPID ROMEO.—Mrs. Hobson (discussing an amateur theatrical entertainment): "It struck me, Mr. Oldboy, that Mr. Smith's Romeo was a very tame affair." Mr. Oldboy: "Necessarily so, my dear madam; Mrs. Smith played Juliet, you know."

"WHAT does the M.D. after your name stand for, Doctor?" asked young Mr. Toofunny, at the reception. "Many Debts," replied the physician, with a look that made Toofunny forget his venerable little joke and feel that the doctor's bill had entered his soul.

A WOMAN was brought before a police magistrate and asked her age. She replied: "Thirty-five." The Magistrate: "I have heard you have given that same age in this court for the last five years." The Woman: "No doubt, your honour. I'm not one of those females who say one thing to-day and another to-morrow."

THE FORCE OF HABIT.—Socks: "Buskin, me boy, I was astonished to learn just now that you ran off the stage in the middle of a scene last night overcome by nervousness." Buskin: "A veteran like myself attacked by stage affright? By the gods, no! Go to, good Socks." Socks: "Well, what was the matter, then?" Buskin: "A boy in the gallery gave so good an imitation of a locomotive whistle that I made an involuntary rush to get on the other track."

A BOY'S WR.—Harry's mother had repeatedly reproved him for joking on the Lord's day, but with little effect. Last Sabbath he was guilty of the same offence, for which his mother took him across her knee and administered a wholesome spanking. "You naughty boy," she said, as he righted himself up again: "don't you know what day it is?" "I should think it was Palm Sunday," replied the little reprobate, with a roguish twinkle in his tearful eye.

ONE OF FORTUNE'S FAVOURITES.—"Young man," he said, "do you respect the fair sex, as all young men should?" "I do, indeed." responded the young man, with emotion. "And there is one of the fair sex, sir, whom I not only respect but adore, and she adores me." "You are fortunate." "Fortunate is no name for it, my venerable friend. Why, in the summer time that girl serves in an ice-cream and confectionery shop, and in the winter she is cashier in an oyster shop."

## KIT

By EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS

Author of "Unseen Fires," "Woman Against Woman," "Her Mistake, etc., etc.

## CHAPTER V.

**T**HE glory of the garden party had waned when the fly containing Captain Montgomery arrived in the grounds of the Priory. Lady Sinclair, as soon as she heard the news of the late arrival, came running across the lawn—a dainty picturesque figure in her soft blue draperies.

She was full of concern and dismay over the accident; and, indeed, by this time, after a long and jolting drive over the rough road, the young man presented a very good appearance of an invalid.

She asked a dozen questions all at once, and gave a dozen orders, and fussed over Maurice in a way that would have been particularly pleasant to him had he not been feeling too tired and in too much pain to appreciate it. In fact, it was a great relief to him when Sir Philip Desmond made his appearance on the scene.

"Get me up to a room somehow," the young man whispered.

It was characteristic of Sir Philip that everything he did was done very quietly, without any bother or fuss.

In about ten minutes Captain Montgomery found himself in a large charming room, extended on a couch, his foot and ankle being carefully examined by his friend.

"Very neatly done," Sir Philip said, as he looked at the bandages. "I don't fancy the local doctor could have done it better. You were in luck, Maurice."

Captain Montgomery smiled faintly.

"I had a fairy to attend to me—a fairy with sea-coloured eyes and hair that would delight an artist!"

"A practical fairy, evidently," Sir Philip said, a little drily, "since she can use her needle. But you have not told me how all this happened, Maurice."

The whole story was recounted.

"And now I suppose I shall be a cripple for the next fortnight."

"You certainly must not try to use your foot in this condition!" was Sir Philip's decisive answer.

"But I must get back to town to-morrow, Desmond, I must."

The pathetic look on the handsome face was almost comic.

"I have a hundred things to do, and, besides, I can't burden Lady Sinclair."

"Make your mind easy about Lena; she will only be too delighted to keep you. I will send my man up to town first thing in the morning for your things, and my wardrobe is at your disposal till your own arrives."

Captain Montgomery frowned and moved restlessly on his sofa.

"Why did I come?" he asked himself for the hundredth time. "A country garden party—perfect madness!"

Sir Philip laughed.

"You must cultivate a little patience. A week in this lovely fresh air will do you all the good in the world! Take years off your life!"

But Captain Montgomery did not view the matter in the same light. He frowned more and more as his mind conjured up all the duties, social and otherwise, which awaited him in town.

"When this doctor comes, I shall tell him I must go up to London to-morrow somehow—it is imperative. Why, there will be the devil to pay if I don't turn up to-morrow night at the regimental dinner, Desmond."

"Well," Sir Philip said, lighting a cigarette as he sauntered to and fro in the room, "the devil will have to be paid in whatever coin he likes, for I prophesy that you will not be allowed to move from your present quarters

under a week at least. What news of your mother? It is ages since I had a letter."

Captain Montgomery gave his friend such information as he desired, in a listless, pre-occupied way—his mind was running all the time on other matters.

It was certainly very hard to have such an accident in the middle of the season, and to be thrust into a dose of country life—he who really detested the country, and who had been revelling in a vortex of social gaiety, which came all the sweater after three years' absence on foreign service. Oh! certainly it was very hard luck. To himself Maurice Montgomery called it by a stronger name.

It was all very well for Philip Desmond to view the matter so cheerfully. Everyone knew Desmond had developed into quite an old fogey, and it was a matter of utter indifference to him whether the season was alive or dead. Of course, with his peculiar system of living, cutting himself off from all contact with his fellow-men whenever he got the chance, the country would appeal most strongly. But Maurice Montgomery was composed of very different materials; and then he was a good ten years Sir Philip's junior, and that counted for a good deal.

And so, taking everything into consideration, perhaps it was natural he should feel not only aggrieved but bad tempered at the present position of affairs, more particularly when he realised that it was his own folly that had brought it about. A little later, however, he began to feel better. The doctor had certainly vetoed all question of his returning to town for the next few days; but after little quiet conversation with Desmond, discussed over a most dainty and appetising little dinner, Maurice began to regard the matter more leniently; and when Lady Sinclair came fluttering in, and hovered about him with a hundred pretty little evidences of the womanly interest he had in her, he became quite good-tempered again.

Philip Desmond unselfishly stayed upstairs all the evening; but at last, when he had seen the young man comfortably ensconced in the luxurious bed, he went down to the gardens for a little air and a smoke.

"There is no getting a word from you, Philip, when your baby is near you," Lady Sinclair cried, half-lightly, half earnestly, as he appeared. She was sitting on the lawn with one or two of her guests, and there were sundry couples dotted about in the distance. The night was delicious, warm, and serene, with a scent of flowers on the faintly moving breeze.

On a low chair close to Lady Sinclair sat Constance Marlowe. She wore no hat, and the moon shone down on her beautifully-shaped head with its pretty brown hair waving away from the brows. She had changed her white dress to another of some grey, sheeny material—her whole aspect gave one a sense of absolute peace. She harmonised well with the night. Sir Philip looked at her admiringly—the moonlight softened her face, the lost the coldness which was, in his eyes, so great a blemish on her beauty.

Lady Sinclair glanced every now and then at her friend with much admiration.

"If I were a man I should adore Constance Marlowe!" she said, in a low voice, to Sir Philip apropos of nothing.

He smiled, as he always did smile, at Lena's enthusiasm.

"Where is your husband?" he inquired. She shrugged her shoulders.

"How can you ask? Up in the tower, of course, looking through the telescope. I believe Robert fancies he will find a new star every night. He comes down looking as dazed as an owl, and shows me some piece of paper with dots and lines on it, expecting me to

understand what it means. As if I could understand!"

"Well, yes," Sir Philip answered, quietly, "it is rather silly of Robert to expect so much!"

"Now, Philip, you are making fun of me—I won't have it. Go and talk to Constance, and please be very nice to her."

"Am I ever anything else?" Sir Philip asks, laughingly, as he rose to obey her.

Constance received him with the gentle sweet smile she had cultivated to such perfection.

"I hope Captain Montgomery is better?" she said. She was not in the least interested in Maurice; she had met him in the winter, when she had been in town for a few days, and, apart from the fact that he was a poor man, her vanity had been hurt by his most evident non-appreciation of her beauty. She was only interested in him now because she knew Sir Philip was very fond of the young man. It was generally understood that Desmond was something in the light of a guardian to the handsome young soldier, the truth being that Sir Philip had a very strong attachment to Maurice's mother, and acted as a trustee and executor to the property inherited from her dead husband. He had much sincere affection for the boy who had done so well in the career he had chosen, and gradually he had drifted into accepting Maurice's definition of him as the right one. Maurice's friend was absolutely a middle-aged man, whose life was lived and whose sun was set.

This, in fact, was very far from the truth, but Maurice had a way of making Sir Philip feel very old indeed; and somehow, when Maurice started an idea, everyone else was sure to, follow it.

To Constance Marlowe, however, Sir Philip Desmond was neither old nor uninteresting; he was a man who pleased her in every way. She admired his courtly, soldierly presence; she recognised his extraordinary intellectual powers, though she was by no means equal to following them; she had a sincere appreciation for his old title and social position, and his wealth was an additional and most desirable charm. She had no fixed plans in her head concerning him, only she was conscious of a decided feeling of annoyance if she saw him absorbed in anyone else, and she had a little flutter of satisfaction whenever she saw him come toward her as he did sun.

They talked over Maurice, and Sir Philip waxed enthusiastic, as he always did when he spoke of the boy's exploits out in foreign parts.

"It is not every youngster who can show such a record as Maurice Montgomery can!" he said. "I confess I did not think there was so much in him; and he is a funny mixture, for now he is home again there is very little of the soldier about him!"

"Fighting is the one strong seed that is rooted firmly in every Englishman's heart," Constance said, laughing in her soft way.

She turned her face a little from him so that he might see her delicate profile, and the shell-like ear, that was so distinctly one of her beauties.

"Yes. I suppose we are a nation of bulldogs, peaceable until we are roused, and then—" Sir Philip laughed.

"I like to feel my countrymen can hold their own," Constance said. "I always wish I had been a man. Women are so useless."

She said this with a touch of the most sincere regret in her voice. As a matter of fact, Constance Marlowe had not the faintest desire to change places with any living soul; and as regarded being of use in the world, well, she did not understand the meaning of the word.

Sir Philip sat down on the edge of a chair, and crossed one leg over another. He looked very distinguished, yet his attire was simplicity itself.



"WHY, SIR PHILIP, YOU ARE A POET! YOU HAVE QUITE IDEALISED MY LITTLE KIT," SAID CONSTANCE.

His only ornament was a charm that had escaped from his waistcoat-pocket.

Constance looked at it carefully, she had noted it before, and she wondered why he wore it, and if it were a souvenir of some tender dream now dead. Decidedly she was interested in him in more than a passing fashion.

He answered her heartily and quickly.

"Oh! I never think a woman should regret being a woman. Think of the thousand and one things she can do that are absolutely beyond us. Fighting for one's country is very fine, but woman's work is purer, better, more noble in every way. We are so helpless without you. Now take to-day, for instance, where would Maurice have been but for the tender, clever ministrations of your sister?"

He said the last word half questioningly. Constance answered swiftly.

"I have no sister," and then she frowned, but her face was turned from him. "Did Captain Montgomery go to the Limes then?" she asked.

Sir Philip told her all that had happened.

"And extraordinarily well she did it too," he said, when he came to Kit's share in the narrative. "Your local doctor would not disturb her bandages. Now, there is distinct evidence of a woman's usefulness." There was a little pause. "I fancy I must have seen Maurice's young Samaritan when I called this afternoon to leave Len's message."

"I expect you did," Constance said. "It is my little cousin, a dear little soul; she lives with us. She is an orphan."

A good deal of information was conveyed in these words to Sir Philip.

"An orphan and a dependent," he thought to himself. "Poor child! not the happiest fate in the world."

"Kit is a most wonderful creature," Constance went on, laughing softly, "she is most learned in every way. I tell her she will make

a model farmer's wife one of these days, and I believe really that is her ambition; it was so like her to turn doctor. I shall have a good laugh at her when I get home!"

Sir Philip was not listening very intently to the end of the speech.

"A farmer's wife, Miss Marlowe?" he said, quoting her words. "Oh! surely such a face, such beauty deserves some higher fate!"

Had anyone given Constance Marlowe a sudden dagger-thrust the effect could not have been more horrible and painful. She could hardly breathe for a moment. A thousand feelings and emotions, such as she had never imagined had place in her heart, sprang all at once into being.

It was the first time she had actually realised the meaning of the word Jealousy. She suffered acutely in this moment.

When she spoke, however, her voice was unchanged. She possessed the art of self-restraint to a high degree.

"What! you really think our little Kit—a beauty, Sir Philip?"

Sir Philip answered promptly, and for once forgetful of the tact that was so much a part of him.

"Almost the most beautiful girl I have ever seen! How could it be otherwise with such eyes. They have haunted me all day. I assure you I think I must have stared the poor child out of countenance when I saw her to-day. Her appearance positively bewildered me!"

He spoke with enthusiasm, and Constance grew icy as she heard him. What horrible thing was this that had come upon her suddenly. Her face grew cold and hard in the moonlight, but she managed to keep her voice as soft and gentle as ever.

"Why, Sir Philip, you are a poet! You have quite idealised my little Kit. It shows how familiarity blunts one's true appreciation. Now you put facts before me, I see almost with your eyes. Yes, Kit has beauty. Her hair is marvellous, extraordinary, and she has

such a quantity. You must see it all down some day. I always regard her as a baby," Constance went on, laughing, "and she runs about just as she likes, as a wild thing. I suppose that is why I have never realised her true worth. Poor little Kit! I am almost tempted to wish you had not given me this idea, Sir Philip. I am so fond of her, and beauty is not always the best thing that can come to a woman!" and Constance sighed as though she could testify to the truth of this fact.

"Tell me about her," Philip Desmond said. "Has she a history? She looks as though there should be some story connected with her!"

"Only a very ordinary everyday story. Kit's history is to come, if ever she has one."

And then Constance gave her own version of her cousin's parentage and early life. She was clever at this sort of thing.

"My mother calls her her second child, and to me she is as a sister," she finished.

"You must be glad to have her with you, Miss Marlowe, are you not?" Sir Philip said, warmly.

Constance acquiesced with gentle enthusiasm, and then she gave a sigh of relief as Lady Sinclair came floating across to them.

"What serious subject are you discussing, you two?" she cried, as she rested her jewelled hand on Constance's shoulder.

The latter answered her laconically,

"We are discussing Kit's beauty."

Lady Sinclair gave a scream.

"Kit—your cousin—beauty! Why, my dear Constance, the child is a monster! Do forgive me. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but she is really very, very plain!"

Constance could have embraced the speaker.

"Beware how you give forth such heretical sentiments before Sir Philip," she laughed.

"He has converted me."

"Oh! but—"Lady Sinclair could not recover herself—"what can you be thinking of,

Philip? What funny tastes you men have, to be sure!"

"Well," Philip Desmond said, laughingly and yet earnestly, "my taste as far as Miss Kit is concerned is one that will be endorsed by every man who sees her. You may take that for granted, Lena."

Lady Sinclair threw out her hands.

"Well, then, I give your sex up altogether. I don't understand you. I positively cannot. No, I cannot. No doubt Kit is a dear good little sort, but she is simply hideous. And I have always said so, haven't I, Constance?"

"You are a person of strong prejudices," Constance laughed, and then she rose to go.

"I really must take my departure, dear Lena," she said. "Look how late it is. Mamma will be getting anxious."

"Philip will see you home, won't you, Philip? It will be a pleasant drive."

Of course Sir Philip immediately seconded the idea, but Miss Marlowe would not hear of it.

"I am quite sure Sir Philip would have the most unkind ideas of me if I were so selfish," she cried, laughingly. "Fancy taking him all the way! No, I cannot permit it. I dare say I shall go to sleep in the cab, for I am very tired."

She was escorted with much care and courtesy to her vehicle waiting; and as Sir Philip took her hand in farewell, he begged to be allowed to call at the Limes the next day for a chat and a cup of tea.

Lady Sinclair kissed her friend affectionately.

"Do ask Mrs. Marlowe to spare you for a few days, dear," she pleaded. "It would be so sweet of you to come over and stay with me. Can't you manage it somehow, Constance?"

Miss Marlowe smiled a little sadly.

"I must not neglect mamma, Lena. You know how much I should love to be with you, but—if I can, I will come, dear;" and with a farewell flutter of her white hand, Constance was driven away.

"She is an angel!" Lady Sinclair cried, enthusiastically, as she slipped her arm through Sir Philip's, and they went back to the chairs. "So good and so unselfish, and so beautiful!"

The "angel" sat bolt upright in the village fly, heedless for once of its many discomforts. She had had a blow, and she did not know how to support it just for the moment.

Her eyes went out through the window to the moonlit scene around, but its beauties were lost on her. She was thinking of a multitude of things. Her serenity, her sense of sovereignty and power was utterly shaken; and all this had come upon her so swiftly, so unexpectedly.

Her thoughts grew very bitter as she neared her home. The touch of her mother that was in her became accentuated. She felt a cold deep anger settling itself in her heart, and a sense of injury.

It was an evil moment for Kit, this change in her cousin's feelings towards her.

Constance Marlowe was not a woman to treat such an experience as had come to her this night lightly or easily. She had been hurt in her most vital part, and she would never forgive the cause of the blow.

Kit's history was indeed and in truth about to begin.

## CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Marlowe's voice was occupied the next morning in the congenial task to her of objecting to her niece. She was sitting in her straight-backed chair examining a pile of linen which Kit had been supposed to darn.

Mrs. Marlowe's voice was more than acrimonious; she had no good word for the work, and she ended her disparaging remarks by taking out a sharp pair of scissors and cutting every mended portion that had cost Kit so much time and trouble.

"Be good enough to bring these to me to-night," she said, curtly, as she pushed the work towards the girl.

Kit's face looked troubled; she disliked openly vexing her aunt; but she was too frank and truthful not to speak her mind.

"I am very sorry, Aunt Helen; but I am quite sure I cannot do them any better. I tried my best, but I cannot darn properly!"

"It is time you learnt!" Mrs. Marlowe said, coldly. She took up her book—a religious one—and settled her spectacles on her face. "Girls in your position, Katherine, should know that there are some things they must do. Your perception, however, grows dimmer and dimmer, and gratitude I have ceased to expect. You do not know the meaning of the word!"

Kit's face flushed, and her lips quivered.

"If gratitude is to be expressed in darning, Aunt Helen," she said, quietly, but with a mischievous glint in her words that she could not repress—humour and pathos were large elements in her composition—"than, indeed, I am afraid you are right to believe I am ungrateful, for—"

Mrs. Marlowe looked at the girl out of her cold eyes; for once she lost her self-control in anger.

"You are impudent! I begin to grow weary of struggling with such a bad nature; you will bring nothing but shame and disgrace upon us. I have borne with you a long time; I have tried to be patient, and have prayed for strength to bear the burden thrust upon me; but there is a limit—I can endure no longer! Leave me, leave me at once!"

Kit paused an instant. Her face had grown white; she suddenly spoke.

"You are a cruel woman!" she said, in low tones. "Call yourself good—you are not good. You give me bread to eat, and you try to kill my heart! Ah! you think I am made of stone, but I am not; I am flesh and blood, like you. The words you have just spoken will never be forgotten by me. I will end this matter once and for all. You shall be troubled with me no longer!"

Mrs. Marlowe stretched out her hand suddenly to her daughter. Constance had come in very quietly, and was listening with astonished ears.

She stepped forward.

"Kit! mother!" she said.

Kit turned at her voice.

"Oh! Constance! Constance!" There was a little break in her voice.

Mrs. Marlowe was in a furious rage; she lost her habitual coldness, she lost her religious restraint; she opened her heart, and launched all the bitterness and cruelty within it on the head of the girl who stood before her defenceless and alone.

Constance felt a thrill of pleasure in this suffering—it was a small return for her night of discomfort she had passed; but her mother's anger jarred on her and annoyed her. There was something plebeian in Mrs. Marlowe, and anger brought that something out very prominently.

Kit bore with the horrible insults as long as she could, then she turned swiftly and went from the room. At the door she turned and put out her hand.

"From to-day," she said, quietly, deliberately, "I accept nothing more from you. I leave your house, and I pray God you may never see me again!"

Constance paused only a moment beside her mother, who had worked herself into an hysterical fit; then rang the bell and went after Kit.

Her heart was beating fast. This was a new complication of affairs. That Kit should go away was decidedly satisfactory; but, then, Constance was practical. A dozen things rushed into her mind at once, and besides, all this upset the neat arrangement of plans she had been making as she lay awake in the early hours.

She ran up the stairs to Kit's room somewhere in the roof; she had never troubled herself to ascend so far before. She knocked at the door; there was no answer. She tried to turn the handle; the door was locked.

"Kit, Kit! it is I, Constance. Let me in, dear!"

There was no answer at first. Constance tapped at the door.

"Kit, Kit, dear, you must not refuse to see me!"

Another pause, and then the door was opened, and Kit stood before her cousin.

"What do you want, Constance?" she asked, coldly. She seemed a changed being—a woman full of dignity and grace. Constance felt the change and frowned a little.

"I want to talk to you," she said, and she went into the room.

Kit followed her.

"Why will you quarrel with mamma, Kit?" Constance said, plaintively.

Kit shivered and was silent.

"You know she is difficult, but—"

Kit put out her hand.

"Your mother is a wicked woman!" she said, coldly, quietly. "She has said things to me to-day that I can never forgive, never forget. Let us say no more. I am sorry if you are troubled, Constance; but there are some things one can bear and some one cannot. My life here is one of the latter. I have ended it!"

But what will you do? You have no money—where can you go?" Constance spoke irritably; she dreaded any sort of a scandal, and she knew her mother's unpopularity.

"I am going to the Rector. He knows me, and will help me to get some living!"

Constance forgot every other feeling in her sudden alarm.

"Kit! you cannot do this! Think of the disgrace!"

The girl smiled bitterly.

"I shall be only fulfilling your mother's words!" she answered.

Constance bit her lip. At all hazards this action must be stopped. What let the whole county into the secrets of life at the Limes. She knew that Kit was greatly liked by everyone round about, and that there were many who knew the girl's story, and the dislike with which she was regarded by her aunt. And then this would mean that, in all probability, the Rector's wife would offer the girl a temporary home, and her value would be increased by the sympathy that would be showered upon her. Constance's heart beat very fast. She must prevent all this. She rose and went to the girl.

"Kit, do you care for me?" she asked, tenderly.

The girl gave a quick sigh.

"You know I do," she answered, "and I am very, very sorry to—"

"Then," Constance said, her arms about the slender figure, her eyes looking up at the set young face, "then you will do something to please me, darling!"

Kit thrilled at the tender word and tender touch.

"If—if it is not—" she began, uncertainly. Poor child, she was not used to so much affection.

Constance saw she had won.

"I am not going to ask you to do anything very hard. I know all you are feeling. I see, I know, life here is very difficult for you. I have been sorry for you for a long time, and I will help you all I can, dear, only—you must be a little patient and promise me, however angry you are with my mother, you will not turn against me, and—"

"Oh, Constance!" tears were starting in Kit's glorious eyes, and her whole frame trembled. "You know I will do nothing to hurt you. You are so good. I see now you do care for me! I—I have sometimes thought you did not; but you will forgive me, won't you? I have made a great mistake."

"Care for you, dear little Kit! Why, of course I do, and I will be your best friend—your sister! Now we must think what is best to be done. You cannot go to the Rector—for many reasons—you understand, dear!"

Constance was herself again. "We must keep our troubles to ourselves, and if you must really go—if you cannot live here—really—cannot—"

"Oh! Constie! I cannot—I cannot. You see, you know how I feel—it is impossible! Help me to do something for myself. I put myself in your hands, you will help me!"

"I will help you," Constance answered, gently. She was beginning to feel a little contented for herself for having allowed herself to be troubled even for half an hour about this girl with her pallid, strained face, her tear-stained eyes, and general ugliness. But, all the same, she did not forget Sir Philip's words, and as matters had now developed, she could not help congratulating herself on the events that were to take the girl out of her life, and so dismiss any further prospect of acquaintance about her.

"Now, follow my advice. Put on your hat and go out for the day with Chris Hornton; he is down in the garden waiting for you. Stay out quite late, and I will come up and talk with you to-night when you are home. Mamma will not see you, and you can be happy in knowing that I shall be thinking of the best plan to help you to independence, and I hope happiness—poor little Kit!"

Kit kissed the two small hands she held.

"Oh, Constie, how good you are to me! I shall never forget it, never, never; and perhaps some day—who knows?—I shall be able to repay you. I pray I may. Oh! I pray I may!" The emotion in her heart glorified her face into sudden beauty.

Constance grew a shade colder.

"Now, run away and trust in me. By to-night I shall have thought of some plan, and will tell you all about it."

She kissed Kit with her false pretty lips, and herself led the girl down to the garden, where Chris was waiting patiently, whistling in a minor key.

Constance watched the boy and girl go down the path, and out of sight; then she turned indoors with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Sir Philip will not see his beauty to-day, at all events," she said to herself, as she went to her mother's room to offer such consolation as she could think of; "nor any other day," she added, with earnestness, "if I manage things well, and I don't think I shall fail—a few tender words, and I can twist the young fool which way I like. What good fate was it that made this open rupture between them to-day of all to-days? Had it not come, it might have been very difficult to have disposed of Kit; but, as it is!" Constance shrugged her shoulders, and then entered her mother's room.

(To be continued next week.)

This story commenced in No. 2,079. Back numbers can be obtained through all Newsagents.

#### PLEADING

Come back, dear heart, and love me still,  
For all is dark and drear and cold;  
I little thought my pride and chill  
Would lose for me thy tender fold.  
Come with the blithesome tone and ways  
I loved so well those olden days.

Oh, I have waited all those years,  
My life has burned to embers low,  
And in these eyes now dead to tears.  
Thou'll read the anguish of my woe.  
Then wilt thou, dear, not come to me  
And kiss my lips so tenderly?

Ah, yes, dear heart, I still must pray,  
Though night and age are drawing nigh,  
Thou'll feel for me so far away.  
And love me, love me ere I die;  
And with rich memories of the past  
Thou'll come at last, thou'll come at last.

#### An Eminent Surgeon's Opinion

The opinion of the late Sir Andrew Clarke on constipation is worth consideration by all sufferers from this ailment. He said that not only was constipation bad in itself, but that it was the chief cause of anaemia in girls and women. Chas. Forde's Bile Beans are a mild vegetable cure for constipation, suitable for the weakest constitutions. Many doctors now prescribe Bile Beans, and so great is their use as a family medicine that over three-quarters of a million doses are now taken every day. They act directly on the liver and stomach, not like mere purgatives which act on the bowels and weaken them. The bile is the natural purgative of the body, and by regulating its secretion Bile Beans end constipation in the surest and most certain manner.

#### WISE EXPENDITURE

The sooner a woman learns that make-shifts which only wear out her strength are not economies, the better for her and her family. Many housewives worry on from year to year with sadly inefficient housekeeping tools, and reduce themselves to mere wrecks after a few years. Their families gain nothing by it, and lose much. Labour-saving appliances are cheap in the end, and a woman should insist on having them, so that she may preserve her temper and health for her family's sake as well as her own. The farmer's wife who did a large family ironing for years with two irons is not a model of economy and patience, but a simpleton. It is pitiful, almost heartbreaking, to think of such a waste of strength and time on the part of a human being. Some women will spend a whole day at the washtub instead of buying a wringer that would save their wrists and backs, and be less injurious to the clothes than hand-wringing. After all, a woman is not a drudge, and no housekeeper whose kitchen is properly supplied with good tools will find the housework beyond her strength. On the contrary, it becomes a pleasure, and the properly constituted woman will take a keen pride in keeping her house, and particularly her kitchen, in spick and span order. Beginners in housekeeping should remember, however, to begin well. If they begin with makeshifts, they will probably continue with them to the bitter end. Household utensils are cheap enough now-a-days, and with care will last nearly a lifetime, so that there can be no excuse for muddling along with clumsy, bad tools. A good workman, however poor, will have good tools. He stints himself in some way to buy them, and so, too, would women if they took a proper pride in their calling.

**AN INNOCENT DIVERSION.**—Friday is the Turkish woman's holiday. Then every one goes to the Sweet Waters of Asia, which consist of a small river running about two miles inland, with trees and meadows on each side. Hundreds of boats assemble and glide up the down the river. Every boat or caïque has two or more Turkish ladies on board. The sight is a very fine one, as each private caïque is most carefully got up, and the boatmen wear brilliant liveries to match the cushions and the long embroidered cloth which hangs over the stern and trails in the water. Beside the liveries the parasols make a wonderful show, and here may be seen all the latest Parisian creations. The ladies must not speak to men, but the careful observer can frequently catch sight of veils lowered or other signal given when a particular boat is passing, and habitual frequenters can point out boats which are sometimes close to each other. An hour before sunset the police boats appear and force all women to leave.

#### Gems

HARD workers are usually honest; industry lifts them above temptation.

Do not get discouraged. It is often the last key on the bunch that opens the lock.

THE rarest feeling that ever lights a human face is the contentment of a loving soul.

MORE helpful than all wisdom is one draught of simple human pity that will not forsake us.

DISCRETION is an old-fashioned virtue, perhaps, but it has made many women beloved and many men successful.

REFINEMENT is better than riches; indeed, refinement alone can make riches a medium of happiness. And the secret of refinement is an unselfish heart.

No "nameless sadness" of "unaccountable discouragement" can live an hour in the person who puts on his hat and hunts up some one who needs help and cheering and who goes to work like a man with a smiling face to relieve somebody's real difficulty.

EVERY human soul has the germ of some flowers within, and they would open if they could only find sunshine and free air to expand it. I always told you that not having enough sunshine was what ailed the world. Make people happy, and there will not be half the quarrelling or a tenth part of the wickedness there is.

IN the unselfish life there is a place for all the delight possible derived through the senses, feeling, or imagination. No lotus-eater propped on beds of amaranth ever experienced half the pleasure that comes to one who, mindful of wife and child, nobly bends his back to the oar, and manfully climbs the climbing wave.

#### POCKET BAGS.

When pockets are worn nobody troubles about bags; but just now, when the skirts are still tightening, and pockets are conspicuous by their absence, bags assume an importance all their own. We all grumble at the stupidity of the dressmaker who is so lamentably wanting in ingenuity as to lack the skill to conceal a pocket somewhere in our gowns, and then we turn, perforce, to the bag, which takes—in some measure—the place of the pocket, which, alas! is not. This bag may be of various sizes and materials. Our grandmothers had a decided weakness for velvet reticules of unassuming black; or, failing velvet, of satin or brocade of a quality that would enable its folds to "stand alone." As a matter of fact, these quaint old brocades, woven by workmen whose art was a religion, are as delicately beautiful to-day, in all their exquisite colouring, as they were over a century ago; and happy the woman who is able to display one of these quaint old bags left her among old-time treasures. The modern reticule is by no means so pretty, and it frequently appears in thick, soft peau de soie, leather, or suede, either plain or embroidered. Stamped leather ones are very pretty, particularly for travelling; but all the leather ones are, of course, most convenient when attached to the belt. At Continental watering-places oblong bags of embroidered suede or soft tan leather are used. These have straight holes cut in coup's, like buttonholes, about two inches from the top, through which strips of leather are threaded to form the strings. The bags themselves are embroidered in conventional designs, and are large enough to hold the purse and handkerchief, and most useful they are.

**WORRIED HOSTESS.**—"Is it not strange, Mr. Stanton, how the smallest things in life make the biggest difficulties?" "That's so. Last night, for instance, when I went home I found the house all right, but for the life of me I couldn't find the keyhole."

## POLLY'S LUCK

## SHORT STORY

 HE cows were coming home through the green shadows of the lane, one by one, to the measured tinkle of their bells. Down in the brook the yellow ducklings were disputing themselves, to the great terror of the speckled hen, their mother; and Polly Kent, forgetful of the cakes baking in the oven, stood in the porch, admiring the contents of the china hawker's seductive barrow.

"I never have had a pair of vases for the parlour mantelpiece," pondered she; "and father says it's all nonsense. But everything looks so dreary and bare, and I should so like these blue vases with the little gilt lines around them and the claw feet!"

The hawker—a shrewd fellow—watched these changes of her expressive countenance, as she turned the blue beauties over and over. He knew what she was thinking, as well as if her thoughts had been printed on her forehead.

"They are pretty, ain't they?" said he.

"I never saw anything so pretty in my life!" eagerly cried Polly.

"They're just the colour of your eyes," said Jem Brown. "Come now; I always did like to match things. I'll make them vases cheap to you. The price is ten-and-sixpence. Call it ten shillings."

Polly's blooming countenance fell.

"I've only four shillings," said she. "Unless you would take eggs and butter in exchange."

"Couldn't do that," said Jem. "I have no use for things like that. Eggs would get broke and butter would spill, jolting round the country in my cart. But I want you to have them vases. Say seven shillings? I wouldn't make 'em that price to everybody!"

Polly shook her head disconsolately.

"I've only four shillings of my own in the world!" she reiterated.

"Well, I'll trust you till the old man comes back. I'm going on farther," said the hawker, "and I'll stop as I come back to collect the balance."

"That would be no use," sighed Polly. "Father says vases, and candlesticks, and china dogs are nonsense. He wouldn't give me a penny."

"That's too bad!" said Brown, cordially sympathising with her distress. "Praps, though, you've got other things you could change? I sometimes take cast-off clothes. I know a respectable old Jew who gives a decent price for 'em. He's brother to the man who sells me china and glass."

Polly's eyes brightened.

"Oh," cried she, "there's grandfather's old grey coat! When father hung it in the garret last week he said it wasn't likely he'd ever need it again. He's bedridden, you see, and only wears knit jackets."

"Suppose you let me look at it?" said Brown.

Polly flew up the narrow, carpetless stairs, and presently returned with the garment in question.

"Seems to be pretty good," said Brown, scientifically fingering it, and holding it up to the light to test its quality. "I guess it's worth the price of the vases, and a little to boot."

Polly drew a quick, fluttering breath.

"It's mine," said she. "I heard grandfather tell father that all he had was mine, because I nursed him through that last rheumatic spell. I'm not robbing anybody!"

"Nobody ever s'posed you was," said Brown, encouragingly. "Here's the vases, and here's half-a-crown. And I'll be pleased to bargain with you some other time."

Polly scarcely waited for the wheels of his wagon to disappear down the lane, to the great discomfiture of the arriving groups of cows, before she arranged her vases on the mantelpiece.

"Look, grandfather, look!" she cried. "Aren't they pretty?"

Old Mr. Kent smiled, and nodded and chuckled from his cosy, white-draped bed in the kitchen bedroom, though with no very definite idea of what it was all about. Polly was pleased—Polly, his pet—and so he also was pleased. And then he fell asleep and dreamed that he was a little boy, picking up chestnuts under the old trees at home.

The next morning all the neighbours knew that the old man had died peacefully at the turn of the night.

"Well, well, such is life," said one.

"We're here to-day and gone to-morrow," shrewdly observed another.

"He'd pretty much outlived his usefulness," said a third. "I guess Polly Kent'll miss him the most of anyone."

He was right. Polly shed some very genuine tears over the coffin as it was lowered into the ground already thick with falling leaves. The old man had always been very kind to her.

"Well, Polly," said her father, as they sat drinking their tea when the funeral was over, "I guess you'll come into your fortune now."

"My fortune, father?"

"Not any great amount of a fortune," said Kent. "But twenty-five pounds is something!"

Polly opened her blue eyes wide.

"Father," she said, "I don't know what you mean."

"It's what your grandfather got from the sale of that bit of ground," explained Kent. "He always said it was to be yours."

"Is it in the bank, father?" asked Polly.

David Kent uttered a snort of contempt.

"In the bank?" said he. "No! What do you take me for? There's too many banks gone of late, and cashiers bunked. I wasn't goin' to help 'em along. No. It's in the left-hand inside pocket of your grandfather's grey coat that hangs upstairs. That was a good enough bank for me!"

Polly half started from her chair. She grew very pale.

"Father!" she gasped.

"Why, Polly, child, what's the matter?"

"I—sold—that coat—a week ago—to a hawker—in exchange for the blue vases on the parlour mantelpiece, and half-a-crown!"

"What hawker!" shouted Kent.

"I don't know, father. I never saw him before. I don't even know his name."

David Kent rose up, walked slowly to the best room mantel, and taking the blue vases down, dashed them into fragments against the back of the kitchen fire.

"There!" he muttered. "Them vases was the dearest bargain you ever made! Don't let me never hear of no such folly again. Of course, we never shall hear any more of your hawker. Twenty-five pounds for a pair of blue china vases and half-a-crown! Well, you have sold your birthright for a mess of potage!"

Nevertheless, when some one told him of seeing a china hawker with a grey pony off on the Bristol road, Kent harnessed his horse and started off in that direction without loss of time.

"There ain't much chance," said he; "but it's my business to feller up every clue. You can go and stay with your aunt till I come back. Jane and the girls will be glad to have you there."

Nevertheless, poor Polly had small heart for the merry Halloween games with which her cousin and half-a-dozen of the neighbouring young people were celebrating the last night in October when she arrived.

"I don't want to play, Jenny," said she. "My heart is as heavy as lead."

"That's the very reason," said Jenny. "We want to cheer you up. You must play, Polly, darling! You must try your luck, like the rest of us! Please, Polly, do!"

And so, with unwilling fingers, Polly threw her pair of chestnuts into the red heart of the fire, and snatched her roasted apple from its blazing bath of brandy.

She looked into the looking-glass, and saw nothing behind her but the round face of the old kitchen clock on the wall.

"It's all nonsense," said she. "I shan't try any more!"

"Just once again," pleaded the merry young people in chorus. "Kate and Nelly and little Fannie are going to try it, and you must too. It's not too much. It's only to run three times around the old Fairy Tree in the hollow, and then if you look into the spring behind the rock you really will see your future husband's face looking over your shoulder. It's beautiful, clear starlight, and this time the omen won't fail."

And so, simply because it was easier to comply with solicitations than to refuse, Polly Kent found herself, not without a pang of superstitious terror at her heart, out under the star-sprinkled sky, beneath the boughs of the Fairy Oak, close to a clear little spring which bubbled out from the heart of a steep rock where, according to rumour, the fairies once used to drink.

Were those footsteps behind her? No, it was only the rustling of the wind in the fallen leaves at her feet, and timidly advancing, Polly ventured to glance at the reflection of her own face in Nature's mirror.

With a sudden shriek she sprang back. Close beside her own another face was reflected—a dark, strong-featured countenance.

"I—I beg your pardon," said a voice. "I didn't mean to frighten you. I've been walking pretty fast, an' I came here for a drink. Don't tremble so. There ain't nothin' to be afraid of. Why, bless my soul, if it ain't the very young lady I sold the blue china vases to! I've just come from your house, an' there wasn't nobody at home. Guess you didn't know all that you was sellin' to me that day."

Polly looked at him breathlessly. She tried to speak, but the words refused to come. He went on—

"I found a roll of notes in one of the pockets, pinned carefully in. Twenty-five pounds. And I'm here to return it. There shan't nobody have a chance to say that Jem Brown ever overreached 'em in a bargain."

So Polly Kent came into her little fortune, after all, and her father was reluctantly compelled to acknowledge that there was at least one honest man on the face of the globe.

Mr. Kent bought a new set of blue-edged china of the pedlar, as a sort of peace-offering to Polly, and had even picked out another pair of the blue vases to replace those he had broken in his wrath, when Jem himself interposed.

"No," said he, "I can't sell you them vases, squire. I want to make 'em a present to Miss Polly. I ain't a millionaire, but I'm a well-to-do man enough, and I guess I can afford the price of a pair of blue vases."

And Polly accepted the gift with smiles and blushes.

When Jenny saw them on the mantel she nodded her head exultantly.

"It's going to come true after all, Polly," she cried, "it's going to come true! It was your future husband's face that you saw in the spring on All Halloween! Deny it if you can! He has been twice to see you already! Deny it if you dare!"

"There's nothing to deny," said Polly, colouring a lovely rose-red.

"But there will be! You like him, Polly, don't you?"

And all that Polly would answer was—

"I'll tell you next Halloween."

**SIGNIFICANT NAMES OF TEAS.**—In the Canton dialect, "Pekoe" means "white hair," and for this kind of tea the very youngest leaves of all are gathered, so young that the white down of babyhood is still upon them—whence their name. "Congo" means "labour"; considerable trouble and labour are taken in its preparation at Amoy, and these are perpetuated in its name. "Bohea" is named after a range of hills in Fo-kiang. "Soo-chong" expresses no sentiments, but a bald fact, being Cantonese for "the small kind." "Hyson" signifies "flourishing spring."

# JUDITH

## CHAPTER XVI.

**J**FOR the English in India should ever feel the need of a patron saint, they could scarcely do better than canonise the wise man of Athens, who wrote on the philosophy of love, of beauty, and of pleasure.

For of all the wise things he said or inscribed, nothing has taken such firm hold on the minds of those who came after him than that theory of the friendship called by his name, which may be the weakest of any proposed.

Platonism is a comfortable specious argument that recommends itself to most on account of its pleasantness, and I think there can be little doubt that some have been lured away by it to their undoing; one is so apt to forget that different people require different laws, and that what is safe for the few is dangerous to the many.

Nor does one consider that the opinions a man holds in the latter years of life, when the distance of time has thrown a halo over the hot passions of his youth, are altered considerably by time and circumstance.

Words that seem full of the divine fire of inspiration are often written on impulse, and almost unconsidered, while the sentence, being a well-rounded one, is allowed to stand.

I have often wondered whether Plato succeeded in persuading himself as he persuaded others; whether he might not have been at least a heretic to his own creed. It must be remembered that before he became a philosopher he was a poet.

Is friendship possible between the sexes? Is a question which the pretty married women and the idle young men of India devote much of their time in answering to their own satisfaction, if not to that of others; but no definite solution to the problem has yet been published.

It is my own opinion that—granting the first danger is surmounted—I mean the sentiment which is inseparable from close intercourse between man and woman—there is every chance of a firm, friendly feeling taking root and flourishing without further fear.

Fire seldom breaks out again in the same place, but the ashes that bear witness to the fact that flame has been speak eloquently of the past, and are instinct with a tenderness that tingles all the future.

This is my opinion; but I am only a unit in the crowd.

There is no doubt that some women and some men rouse more interest than their fellows, and no one in Jaipore had caused more speculation since her coming out than the Honourable Mrs. Hare.

Having brought with her the reputation of being a beauty, she had, as yet, lived up to the idea without apparent effort.

She was a woman who always presented a most excellent effect, who always looked finished and complete, never giving outsiders the slightest clue as to how she arrived at that state of perfection.

Utterly above that feminine weakness of confiding items of purely personal interest, she would as soon have thought of mentioning what she had had for dinner as the date of the arrival of a box of clothes from England.

For all that could be asserted to the contrary, the gowns that were so much admired might have grown outside her door, been made without hands, bought without price.

Nor would she ever be induced to discuss bazaar rates, nor the peccadilloes of her servants, with the other thrifty matrons of the station.

In all these things she lived to herself apart, and the comparative mystery in which she was enwrapped may have contributed to the attraction that she exercised over women as well as men.

That Laurence St. Quentin was a so-called friend was well known, and she had other admirers that she never appeared to encourage, yet who always remained faithful, and were certainly discreet.

No one had ever breathed a word against her, though perhaps no one would have actually disputed any slander had it been raised, for she was not actually popular, and in several quarters was accused of pride and affectation.

Winifred and Judith were a little surprised one afternoon at a summons to tea with her, for the former had never been honoured by much notice, and her dislike to the latter had been apparent. They were half-inclined to refuse the invitation, but on this Mrs. Sherston put her veto.

Winifred had suspected a motive for this sudden display of friendliness, but was annoyed on Judith's account, when, as they were ushered in, Mrs. Hare started from her seat with some show of embarrassment, and from a footstool at her feet, in closest proximity, Captain St. Quentin also rose, twirling his moustaches and looking any thing but pleased at being discovered in such an attitude.

It had flashed into Winifred's mind at once that it was a planned thing, that Mrs. Hare had with intent arranged the scene, and her confusion was only acted; but Judith, ordinarily so clear-sighted, was rendered dense by a sudden sharp pang of jealousy it required all her self-possession to conceal. Though she smiled and spoke pleasantly in greeting, her voice was hard and strained, and once or twice her lip quivered painfully.

If Mrs. Hare had deliberately designed to hurt her she had her will, and the light eyes, which were the worst feature in her face, twinkled maliciously as she pressed her rival's hand, and with simulated concern asked after her health.

"I believe those morning walks have done you more harm than good. You are not looking half so well as you did when you came first," she said, smiling sweetly.

It was Winifred, not Judith, who replied that those walks had been given up some time ago.

"Ah! that was very wise!" commented Mrs. Hare, as she sank back in her chair and lazily poured out the cups of tea it was Captain St. Quentin's office to hand round.

She made use of his services in a matter-of-fact way that seemed to imply it was no new thing for him to wait upon her, and when he had performed his duties she vouchsafed to him no thanks, but with a little familiar nod signified him to resume his former position. He demurred at first.

"A long-legged fellow like myself requires more room," he said, taking up his stand with his back towards the fire.

"You do not generally find it so; and you are keeping all the heat away from us!" she objected, playfully. "Now sit down, like a good boy!"

Very unwillingly he obeyed; and from his lowly attitude stole an uneasy glance at Judith. But she never looked his way. She ate her cake and stirred her tea as though these were her only interests in life.

"I always think," went on Mrs. Hare, meditatively, "that one can talk so much more easily in a low seat. Ideas come more readily if your body is at ease, and the mere absence of formality evokes words in which to clothe them. Now Captain St. Quentin was really growing quite eloquent before you came!"

She was looking very pretty as she spoke; the fire flames shining on her hair, and lending it a warmer shade, while the light filtering from outside through the crimson-lined chinks shed a rosy and most becoming hue all through the room.

The glow that fell also on Judith's face did

not seem to brighten; it rather accentuated its pallor, as a sunset effect on a marble statue.

The suggestion of the man she believed to be her own lover sitting at this woman's feet and speaking earnestly—as she had fancied he only spoke to her—seemed to suspend all the animation on which her beauty mainly depended. Her eyes and even the mobile mouth were quite expressionless as she made some conventional reply.

She talked a good deal once the ice of her silence was broken, but an instant after any sentence had been enunciated could not have said what it contained.

Her voice sounded clearly in her own ears, and she criticised its utterances with a stranger's impartiality, only wishing that she could escape from the senseless babble that annoyed her.

To Winifred the scene was like a picture, and every now and then she fell out of the conversation and allowed herself to contemplate it at leisure.

Passionately fond of beauty, and with a keen perception of all those lesser attractions which combine to make a perfect whole, she did full justice to the charm that certainly Mrs. Hare possessed. Though not actually a pretty woman, she had many claims to admiration which pretty women cannot always assert.

To begin with, her carriage was wonderfully good; the slow, undulating step and languid turn of the slender throat would have won for her notice wherever her lot had been cast; even the slim, white fingers covered with gems which flashed in the light, always restless, yet with something suggestive of caresses in their movements—even they had a power of pleasing in themselves.

The exquisite white skin, a little too pale perhaps upon her cheeks; the soft, golden hair that grew in rings upon her forehead, then fell in big waves behind her ears where it was twisted round in minute elaborate twists; these, too, were graces in themselves, but there was another more potent, if less easy to define.

From head to foot she was endowed with the gift of intense womanliness; certainly no man with whom she ever conversed, even for a moment, forgot her sex.

At first sight this might seem very slight praise, only in looking deeper is it possible to realise all it implies. In these days of artificialities of different sorts and degrees, it is very seldom one sees a natural figure. Far more frequently is one reminded of the corsetière and dressmaker than of the ideal type of woman.

There are young girls and old girls, flighty matrons or russet widows, but how few who are best described by that one simple, beautiful word woman. A woman even as she who caused the original sin and fall, or she whose fatal fascination robbed two nations of its best and brightest or again she who was the wife of three kings, and blinded all of them to her faults by her wondrous beauty.

In these cases was it mere loveliness of face and form that gave them such terrible power? I think not. There is a something that only one in a thousand has at her command—a subtle essence, an enchantment that is very potent to the senses, but can hardly be expressed.

Being so rare, it was strange that two out of the three women present should possess it—though each used it differently, and had attained it by different methods. Mrs. Hare had won it by art and by force of determination, with the idea of helping out her insufficient beauty, and in her intention had certainly succeeded; but on Judith the mantle had fallen without thought or knowledge of her own, and she wore it naturally with unconscious winsomeness.

Winifred, admiring both, yet her own friend infinitely most, could not resist a searching glance into Captain St. Quentin's face.

He had taken an early opportunity of aban-

dening his low position, and now stood on one side of the fire—the side farthest away from Mrs. Hare—taking his share of the conversation, but only glancing cursorily at the two women, both of whom had stirred his interest deeply, though in a different fashion and degree.

He could not well distinguish between them now while both together, so addressed his remarks to Winifred, who responded with a certain dryness.

Good-looking as he was, and on that account holding his own position in the picture she had admired, she liked him none the better for that, and what had occurred to-day convinced her that he was not worthy of the sentiment he had roused in Judith's breast. That it was only a sentiment she hoped, but Judith's drooped eyes and quiet manner helped her to no discovery.

When they said good-bye, the young man accompanied them to their carriage, and beyond the range of Mrs. Hare's vision allowed all the feelings he had hitherto repressed to become apparent in his face.

Winifred had discreetly hurried on, and the other two stood alone in the hall as he said, impressively—

"It has been a great delight to see you—even so!"

"I was afraid we had interrupted confidences," said Judith, too full of different emotions to weigh her words.

"That was an utter fabrication. Mrs. Hare must have been joking, and the joke was very poor. I was bored to death before you came!"

She looked up suddenly, trying to read his thoughts. Whether his words were true or not, it was evident that he believed them to be so now; but men are apt sometimes to deceive themselves as they deceive others. The earnestness of his blue eyes imparted itself to hers, and she blushed warmly.

"It is quite a long time since we saw you at the Club!" she said.

"Very long, terribly long," he agreed. "Have you quite given up those morning walks?"

"Oh, quite," she answers, decidedly, the blush deepening as she remembered Mrs. Hare's caustic remarks.

"I will find a way to see you soon," he assured her, as perforce they joined Winifred, who, having made the most of getting in and settling herself in the carriage, had at last come to the end of her devices, and sat quiescent.

As they drove away, leaving Captain St. Quentin standing bare-headed in the porch, Judith heaved a faint sigh, though the brightness of her eyes betrayed that its origin was not all sorrow.

"I shall never go to that woman's house again. I hate her!" she remarked, presently, with viciousness.

"I don't think she can be very fond of you," commented Winifred, and Judith turned to her eagerly.

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Dislikes are generally reciprocal."

"But you implied a reason."

"And is there not a reason?"

"Is there?" asked Judith again, though her mouth twitched slightly.

"A very big one, I think, more than six feet long, and broad in proportion."

Judith laughed, but presently returned to the charge. "I wonder if he ever cared for her?" she hazarded, shyly.

"Not doubt he did, but now he likes you, and to-morrow he may like someone else!" was the reply, with a candour that was meant to cure by its very cruelty.

At this Judith chose to take offence, and maintained a dignified silence till they reached home, then went direct to her room.

Her windows were closed, and she unbolted and threw them open, standing just outside for a moment to cool her cheeks, which were burning still.

From the adjoining room, which was Mr. Sherston's private sanctum, came the sound of voices raised in discussion. She could not distinguish any words, and, indeed, was too full of her own thoughts to care much who were speaking, or what was said; but presently someone came outside, and she saw it was Mr. Johnson.

"I am sorry to seem disobliging, of course," he was saying, "but I cannot alter my tactics to suit your taste. I always play for my own hand, you know, and let my partner shift for himself!"

Over Judith came that strange sensation which can be unknown to none—the uncanny feeling that what is happening at that moment has occurred before, either in dreamland or in another unrecognised existence.

The familiarity of the scene filled her with dismay, and she held her hands tightly over her eyes to do away with the weird impression. Then, gradually, as she stood so blindfolded, some discrepancies struck her, and what was in her memory stood out more clearly.

It was indoors and not outside that a similar incident had occurred at her father's house in town, and she was standing on the higher flight of stairs, looking over the balustrade, while he parted with a man she had never seen before.

Afterwards she had heard that the man's name was "Matthew Collett," and that he was her father's partner, who had robbed him of all—even his good name.

The words he had spoken, and his impatient cynical laugh, had been stamped deeply on her brain, and even his appearance as he walked away had been remembered.

That all these things should be repeated now could only admit of one conclusion. The actor in both scenes was the same, the name of Johnson being merely an alias for Collett, and chance had delivered him into her hands.

She might be avenged now, if she chose; and surely she could not hesitate, the power being hers, and the injury done of so cruel, so unscrupulous a nature!

#### CHAPTER XVII.

In her excitement at the discovery she had made, Judith felt she could not rest a moment without confiding its import to someone else. The door of the Commissioner's room was open; he was alone; and as he was the proper person to speak to first, she did not attempt to resist her natural impulse to go to him then and there.

To cross from the threshold of one door to another occupied a very short space of time, but she waited nearly half a minute before she arrested Mr. Sherston's attention.

Quite unconscious of her presence there, he was leaning forward in his chair, his elbows on his knees, his head upon his hands, while he looked down gloomily on to the floor. He started nervously, and stood up at once when he heard his name spoken.

Judith dashed into her subject at once, and without perambulation.

Coming forward into the room, she rested both hands, palm downwise, on the table, and, gazing straight into his eyes, asked excitedly—

"Mr. Sherston, do you know the real name and the antecedents of the man who has just left?"

His natural expression of surprise changed to one of actual fear, but he controlled himself, and pushed a chair towards her—a civility she impatiently ignored.

"Collect yourself, Miss Holt, and tell me exactly what you mean," he said, soothingly.

"I thought my question was very plain, but I will repeat it if you please. What is the name of the man who went out just now?"

"Really, Miss Holt, you are talking very strangely. Considering that you have lived in the same house with Mr. Johnson for more than a month, the inquiry seems a very superfluous one, unless you mean it as a joke."

"His name is not Johnson; he did not come from Australia, but from England. I know all his past history, the crime he has committed, and I intend to bring it home to him. He was my father's partner, who absconded with all that he could lay his hands upon, and ruined him. I will tell you the whole story, if you like."

She paused for breath, and a little from amazement. That her first words had had their weight with him she had seen, but was puzzled to note that the context had weakened their impression—having forgotten her former faint and always vague suspicions. A look of unmistakable relief came over his face as she concluded, and he was able to remark, quite calmly—

"My dear young lady, you are talking very wildly, very wildly indeed, and your statements are so vague that they are difficult to confute, though, as Mr. Johnson is a guest under my roof, perhaps I ought to take your accusations seriously. By-the-bye, I think you said his name was not Johnson. May I inquire how you propose to christen him instead?"

His whole tone was sharp with mockery he did not try to conceal from her whom he addressed, but though her enthusiasm was somewhat damped by the doubt he threw upon her words, she answered, valiantly—

"He was my father's partner, and his name was Matthew Collett. The firm was only known as Holt and Co."

The Commissioner had been standing up since she came, but now he sank back into his chair with an easy smile of derision, becoming grave again, however, immediately, as he asked, sternly—

"And why have you not communicated this fact to me before?"

"Because I have only just discovered it."

"Then I must understand that you had a very slight acquaintance, if any, with—with this partner of your father's. I suppose you lived away with relations or friends?"

"No, I was never away from home for very long, but my father would not allow me to meet any of his business connections."

Mr. Sherston, balancing a paper-knife upon his finger, watched it thoughtfully a moment before he commented—

"Then how was it you came to know Mr. Collett?"

"I never knew him, I never even saw his face; but I heard him speak once, and just now I recognised his voice, the very phrase he used."

"And you ask me seriously to consider what you have said evidence against my friend, my daughter's betrothed husband?"

He had laid the paper-knife down on the table, and passed his hand across his mouth with a rather ostentatious effort to hide his amusement at the idea.

"Do you think I would have come to you had there been a doubt in my mind?"

"I am afraid you have not succeeded in communicating any of your convictions to me; or, rather, to speak truly, I am glad, for Mr. Johnson is a friend of some years' standing, and I would certainly not like such an accusation to be proved against him."

"I understand you to say, some time ago, that he was a new acquaintance," exclaimed Judith, impulsively.

He started, and looked at her searchingly.

"I did not suppose that it would interest anybody to know that we had met before," he said, with hesitation.

Judith remained silent, pondering over the case as it stood now. It was evident that she had failed to make the truth clear to him, and she could not exactly blame him for being slow of conviction.

She knew by instinct that what she suspected was fact, not fancy; but, naturally, he required proofs, and these she could not give.

"Give me time," she pleaded, "and I will show you that I have good grounds for what I have said—that am not mistaken nor mis-

led by a resemblance. Of course, I cannot expect you to believe evil of your friend on my word alone."

He threw one leg over the other, and surveyed her quizzically.

"My dear Miss Holt, you may have as much time as you please. In the meantime, may I request that you keep your suspicions to yourself? I have no fancy for having a humbug thrown down in the middle of my quiet household."

She moved from her position, which was becoming rather strained, and stood upright, ready to go, feeling that, after all, she had done very little good in coming.

"You understand that I forbade you to mention the subject either to my wife or Winifred?" he repeated, peremptorily.

Then she faced him, a passionate gleam of indignation shining in her bright blue eyes.

"Do you mean, Mr. Sherston, that you will allow that engagement to go on?"

"And why not?" he questioned, calmly.

"Because if you have known him before, you must be aware that he is not a good man—not a fit husband for your daughter. Besides, she does not love him."

"Are you quite sure that Winifred would be grateful for your interference? She is no child, and accepted him of her own free will."

He did not look at her as he spoke, and she thought she detected a slight tremble in his lips, which encouraged her to say, earnestly—

"Even supposing that she loved him and he her, and that he escaped the penalty of his crime, could she have any prospect of happiness in marrying such a man?"

"You are trying my patience very far. Remember, the charge you have brought is utterly unsubstantiated, and so outrageous a that it is impossible I could credit it as it is. I make every allowance for the strong feeling you have, doubtless, on the subject of your father's loss, and I can well imagine that you are inclined to believe everything else to have some connection with it. You have never done me the honour to confide in me the story of your misfortunes, but I am sure that no ordinary run of circumstances could have brought you to the necessity of earning your livelihood as you are doing now."

He paused, but when she did not speak continued—

"I am glad to take this opportunity of telling you how pleased we both are, Mrs. Sherston and myself, to have you as a companion to our daughter, and that we shall hope not to part with you even after she is married. Winifred is very fond of you, and will not wish to lose sight of you again."

"You are very good, but it is impossible to discuss all this as things are," said Judith impatiently, as she moved away.

He rose and held open the door while she passed out.

"It needs no discussion," he said, with formal courtesy. "Now that you know our wishes you can consult your own."

Judith went back into her room, disheartened, but not despairing.

It could surely not be difficult to prove the identity of a man who had committed such an important fraud.

"She would write home at once—the mail went out the following day—asking for a photograph of Mr. Collett, and for instructions how to proceed against him.

It was, of course, quite possible that if he heard what she knew he would have flown long before she received any reply; but in any case Winifred would be saved, and she had no definite thought as yet of recovering anything for themselves of the property that had been stolen, nor had it struck her that, above all things, she should force him to clear her father's name.

The discovery had come upon her with the suddenness of a blow, and she was almost stunned for the time, seeing only the immediate effects of it—nothing of the great change it might make in her future prospects.

A servant brought lights to the door, and she took them in, then settled herself down to write her letters; and having forgotten to draw the curtains across the windows, the Commissioner stopped for a moment as he passed, and watched her anxiously, wondering what was causing the quick changes of expression as her pen travelled rapidly over the paper, and why at one time she caught her breath as though startled into pain, and then stopped writing for a time.

It had suddenly dawned upon her that if this Mr. Johnson was really the man Collett, and he should be arrested, her father would be once more rich and honoured among his fellows, and in that event there would be no further reason for her staying out here.

Never dreaming of the white and haggard face quite close to the fine grass-chick, she questioned herself how it would affect her were she summoned home, unwillingly confessing though only to her own heart, how hard it would be to part from one who, after all, was only an acquaintance, the friend of a few weeks at most; and the hot blushes mounted to her face, and a lump rose in her throat that nearly choked her.

Then, as she brushed away a moisture from her eyes and resumed her writing, Mr. Sherston walked on, considerably put out, and quite at a loss to account for the emotion to which he had been momentarily a witness.

Judith did not join the rest at dinner, under the plea of headache, asking for a cup of tea to be sent to her room.

She thought it would be impossible to meet them all with this secret as a barrier between herself and them; but afterwards, when her letters were finished, and she could take no further present steps in the matter, she found she was equally incapable of remaining there inactive, and an hour later found her entering the drawing-room.

Winifred was there alone, with her dog

clasped tightly in her arms, fondling and addressing it in superlatively endearing terms.

She turned to Judith with a very pink spot on each cheek.

"Are you better, dear?" she asked, her voice tremulous with some emotion.

"I am all right. What is the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing at all!" was the hasty reply; and then the temptation to tell what had angered her proving irresistible, she added, with a tragic emphasis that was almost comic—

"Mr. Johnson kicked my dog. He did not see I was in the room; and, Judith, was it not mean and cowardly! Do you wonder that I hate him so?"

"I wonder that you ever promised to marry him!" gravely.

Winifred gave a quick gasp, then put down the dog, and brushed a few white hairs from her dark dress.

"I was excited—I scarcely knew what I was saying. You know how absurdly fond I am of all animals, and Dandy in particular."

"And 'love me, love my dog,' is not Mr. Johnson's motto!" began Judith, bitterly; but Winifred nestled close to her, and with an upturned, piteous face, said, wistfully—

"Don't jest about it, dear. Help me to be strong, and to go on with what I have undertaken. More depends upon this marriage than you can guess!"

"I guess more than you think, and know more, too. Mark my words, Winifred, you will never marry that man! I feel you never will!"

"And I see no escape," said the other, sadly.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

That a man should, in a moment of thoughtless impatience, or, perhaps, with some good cause for wrath, kick or otherwise maltreat

# HEADACHE

**I**N the course of a conversation with a "Widnes Weekly News" reporter, Mrs. THOMAS CHARNOCK, who resides at Forest Street, Widnes, said:—

"From early childhood I had attacks of biliousness and violent headaches which completely prostrated me. These attacks were accompanied by nausea, violent retching, racking pains in the head, and also dizziness. I was completely helpless while they lasted, and could not attend to my domestic duties. My complexion became pallid and I feared consumption. The doctor said it was anæmia, and he treated me, but without any good result. It was at this stage I read of Bile Beans. I tried them, and soon after commencing with them my illness began to pass off, and I felt more like my old self. I continued taking the Beans, growing better steadily, and now I am in splendid health, and happy and bright. To Bile Beans alone I owe my cure."



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his sweetheart's dog does not seem so heinous an offence; yet, in this case, it threatened to have a serious effect.

It was not only her love for all animals—and Dandy in particular—made Winifred rise up in arms; it was rather that this act, pardonable in itself, was the last straw of a burden already too hard for her to bear. Every feeling had been overstrained so long that, while there was real reason for self-control, she would not have given way; it remained for a trifl to nearly upset the resolutions she had believed so firm.

Perfectly as she played her part before—neither over-acting the rôle of fiancée, nor showing marked avoidance of attentions that must have been distasteful—it seemed as though in a moment the aptitude for deception had deserted her, and anyone could have read the terrible truth in her face. Even Mr. Johnson was taken aback, when he approached her the next morning, by the look of actual loathing she cast upon him.

"I am very sorry, Winifred," he said.

"It is of no consequence; the dog is not hurt," she replied, with impracticable coldness.

"The little wretch got right under my feet, and I am not fond of dogs," he went on, seeing that his first words had had no effect.

Winifred's silence was so discomposing that he turned to Judith, who was also present.

"I have good reason not to be fond of them," he said, with a strong shudder, as though at some unwelcome remembrance.

"Indeed!" returned Judith, icily; and, turning her back on him, rather ostentatiously caressed the cause of disagreement, he being under Winifred's chair with only his head protruding, while, with vigilant black eyes, he watched the movements of his declared enemy, as though expecting some strategical attack. When Winifred rose and went away, he trotted after her.

"What have I done?" asked Johnson, allowing a slight gleam of amusement to break through his accent of remorse.

"I should not have thought you would need to ask that of me!"

"Why not?" quickly.

The great cause she had to feel vindictively towards him, and the expediency of keeping her knowledge of his antecedents a secret until she was able to punish as well as reprobate him, kept her silent; yet she could not bring herself to ignore the fact altogether, since the could but be aware that she was the daughter of the man he had defrauded so short a time before.

"At least I have not offended you!" he went on, fixing his dark, closely-set eyes upon her face.

"If you vex Winifred you vex me," was the evasive reply.

He laughed cynically.

"Truly a most Arcadian state of affairs, though I daresay, like other female friendships, its tenure is dependent on a rivalry of bonnets or admirers. But at least I cannot deny that it should exist at all is a proof of some magnanimity on the part of my betrothed of which few would be capable!"

He took her disdainful glance to be one of inquiry, and continued, coolly—

"Very few women can tolerate others who are a thousand times more winning and more often wooed than themselves. It is fortunate for me that Winifred seems singularly free from that awkward weakness, jealousy!"

"She could never have cause to be jealous. She knows that!" fiercely.

"And, naturally, she has every confidence in me. Whatever may be my faults, changeableness is not one. The first day I saw her I made up my mind she should be my wife, and even had I met with any opposition it would have made no difference. I should have gained my own way in the end!"

"The coercion of a weak girl through her love for her father is scarcely a subject for boasting, I should say. You must have seen

that she does not care for you. Why will you not be generous and release her?"

A vibration in the full, rich tones of her voice testified to her earnestness, and some vague idea that men were never all bad filled her with a momentary hope of success.

It was dispelled at once by the almost tigerish curl of his lips, as, with the air of wishing to give a patient hearing to an absurd request, he leaned forward and waited for her to continue.

"That is all I have to say," she finished, weary.

"Then I will be as candid as yourself. I will not pretend to be surprised at what you have said, that 'Winifred does not care for me,' as I think you delicately described the state of her feelings, nor will I profess to have much affection for her. It is distinctly a marriage of convenience—my convenience, be it understood—and where that is concerned I do not often yield my claim. If anything could turn me, it would not be what you urged on her behalf, though one thing you could say would have the effect at once. Once before I told you I loved you, and then declared that even my love for you should not change my plans. Now, having discovered—or, rather, realised my own weakness—I retract those words. I love you so madly that I will sacrifice everything for your sake! If you will be my wife, Winifred shall be free!"

Trembling with anger, Judith pushed away her chair and stood up.

"You are unfortunate, Mr. Johnson, in your selections. My hatred for you exceeds hers, if possible!"

"Then we will not discuss the question any further," she said, quietly. "I will not even express my sorrow at your decision. These things are always out-lived, and I am no puling, love-sick lad. Let us both forget that this has passed between us. I suppose

you will not care to apprise Winifred of the fact that she—is not first in my affections."

"If it would do her any good I would tell her."

"But it will not do any good. Nothing will ever 'do any good'—now."

He spoke drily, yet at the sight of Judith's face, lovely in spite of its extreme pallor, and the stern condemnation that sat so strangely on its softly-rounded contour, he could not resist one more attempt to win her.

"I suppose my case is quite hopeless? You would never marry me, even if I were free, and promised all that could enter into your head to ask?"

"Never, never!" passionately, her thoughts reverting to her handsome lover, and the contrast between the two men stinking her with force.

Perhaps Johnson guessed of what she was thinking; for he said, with bitterest sarcasm—

"I can quite imagine that in manner and appearance I fall short of—others, but some virtues I have that they may not possess—strength of mind and constancy. Mark my words, you will never detach Captain St. Quintin from the woman he calls his friend."

"I do not know why you should do me the honour to discuss my personal affairs," declared Judith, with dignity, but her heart sank with a foreboding that he might be right, though malice and no spirit of prophecy inspired his words.

"That ought not to surprise you after what I have said. Everything connected with you interests me, and always will, however seldom we may meet. I am sorry we cannot come to a better understanding."

The cool flippancy with which he spoke disgusted Judith; it was only by a strong effort she preserved a comparatively calm demeanour, and said, quietly—

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"You refuse, then, once for all, to give up your claim on Winifred?"

"I do most decidedly refuse," laughing outright.

"And you have never thought that others might be equally determined to prevent such a marriage, that they are resolved to spare no pains to save her?"

"It would make no difference," he answered, lightly. "An obstacle or two in my path would only heighten my pleasure in triumphing in the end."

"But supposing you have enemies who hold you in their power, who know all your past, and could convict you, if they chose, of actual crime?"

"Convict! Crime! Those are strong words, Miss Holt," quickly, bending forward and squinting horribly in his effort to read from her expression whether she spoke from intention or whether only launching random shots.

His face was rendered hideous by the cowering with which he tried to conceal how seriously he was disturbed by what she had said; and Judith shrank away from his malignant glance, though she pursued her advantage with what courage she could muster.

"They are not stronger than I meant to be. Do you not think you had better pause before you deliberately rouse a dangerous enemy?" she asked, undauntedly.

He was so close to her then, and his attitude became so threatening as she spoke, that she was half-afraid he might resort to physical violence, though several were within call. Indeed, for a moment he did grasp her wrist, but almost immediately released it, and with rather a mechanical pretence of merriment returned, laughingly—

"Do you know, Miss Judith, India is a capital country for anything of that sort. It is the easiest place in the world to get rid of persons who become dangerous!"

"Do you mean murder?" she cried, with horrified, distended eyes.

"I mean nothing so downright. This is the land of mysteries. A man is found with his throat cut on the road, and it is put down to suicide, and scarcely an inquiry made. But that is a blunt and brutal way of doing things, when poisons can be procured that leave no trace, and I have heard it asserted—though for that I cannot vouch—are painless in their action."

"A man may be very unscrupulous, and yet stop short of murder," said Judith, bravely, though with blanched cheeks.

"Of course, of course. I was only romancing for your amusement. It is my way to exaggerate when I feel strongly on any subject. You must not take me too seriously, and I, too, will treat what you have said about enemies, etc., as a fable with which one tries to frighten a naughty child. We are living in the nineteenth century, when conviction is nearly as impossible as crime, and we look on murder as a remnant of the dark ages. Let me tell you, for your comfort, that no dacoits are ever seen in this Presidency, and the sale of poisons is prohibited in the bazaars."

She ought to have been reassured by his ringing manner, but, somehow, his first words had sunk too deeply to be uprooted by any others, and she could not cast off the gloomy dread they had created. His vindictive glance, though quickly succeeded by a pleasanter one, had proved to her that he was quite capable of carrying out everything at which he had hinted, and it only seemed the more alarming that he afterwards tried to weaken the impression he had made.

For a few seconds she kept her eyelids drooped, and when she raised them he was gone, the very noiselessness of his exit augmenting its effect. Had anything more passed between them she might have forgotten his veiled threats, but now they remained distinct in her memory, and filled her with overwhelming, if unwilling, fear.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

Never very strong, Winifred, having once given way, seemed utterly unhinged by all that had lately passed, and the next morning was in a high state of fever, which lasted some days, and which the doctor pronounced to be due to nervous causes. She could not sleep at nights, and even when she dozed off from very weakness, started up in terror, as though her dreams were haunted by a sense of trouble.

Once she called out her future husband's name, but it was in such frightened tone, and such big beads of perspiration stood upon her forehead, that not even Mrs. Sherston, who was still very enthusiastic about the engagement, could construe the exclamation into a desire for his presence. It was as though strength of mind and body had failed at once under the strain to which they had been subjected, and for a long time it was a question whether a serious illness might not ensue.

Judith was indefatigable in her care, and Winifred was never so quiet and so amenable to the doctor's orders as when her hand lay in that of her beautiful nurse, and the sweet, clear voice she had learnt to love so well soothed her by its mere sound.

Sometimes she gave way to paroxysms of excitement, and would sob, even scream, aloud, until exhausted. At these times Judith's influence was noticeable. The weak, racked frame grew still at her first touch, the sobs quieted, and after a while would cease, though fits of trembling recurred, as at some terrifying recollection.

Judith never quite knew where the delirium of fever began or ended, for it was facts, not fancies, that seemed to disturb her mind; her thoughts never wandered from the one theme which had occupied it of late.

Once, in a very passion of tears, she threw herself into Judith's arms.

"You said you would save me!" she sobbed out, piteously; and again and again Judith

assured her that the promise would be kept, though just then she had no very clear notion how.

Mr. Sherston had been much distressed at his daughter's illness. He was very fond of her, though undemonstrative in his manner, and to see her unhappy caused him acute pain.

It had been impossible to refuse her offered sacrifice, as it also seemed beyond his strength to release her from the self-imposed burden now. Yet, had she appealed to him, it would not have been in vain.

In spite of his almost slavish devotion to public opinion and a desire, stronger than any other impulse in his nature, to stand high in the Anglo-Indian world as one of its most shining lights, he had still sufficient manliness not to force his daughter to become a scapegoat for his sin.

At a word he would have freed her from her promise, but Winifred, in her father's presence, was always singularly silent, and in her most irresponsible moments appeared sensible that an incalculable phrase might undo all the good she had effected.

When the fever had left her, and gradually she recovered strength, he was nervously anxious to discover on what footing she would receive her affianced lover—if, indeed, she consented to see him at all. He would not, however, have dared introduce the subject himself, and was relieved when Mrs. Sherston, quite unconscious that she was treading on delicate, if not dangerous, ground, suggested that doubtless Mr. Johnson would like to pay the invalid a visit now that she was convalescent.

Winifred was lying on a couch near the window when the remark was made, and the warm sunlight that streamed in prevented her mother noticing the intense pallor that crept over her face, which was white enough before.

The breeze, too, lifting her hair, helped to throw a shadow over her eyes and lips; her eyes, wide open with apprehension at the ordeal she would, nevertheless, not attempt to

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shirk, her lips quivering painfully at first, but firm in their expression when at last she spoke.

"I will see him now, if you like, and if he cares to come."

A relieved sigh broke from the Commissioner unawares.

More than he knew had he dreaded a possible revulsion of feeling after so severe a shock to the system, yet something akin to compunction made him give her a chance to rescind her words.

"Don't see him, child, if it is too much for you. I will tell him anything you like," he said, and had the grace to feel ashamed of his satisfaction when, gently but firmly, she reiterated her intention.

Mr. Sherston left the room.

But though the father and daughter were alone for some minutes, neither spoke of what both were thinking. Mr. Sherston kept his gaze averted, and Winifred lay quite still, almost breathless with suspense.

Hateful as was the touch of her lover's hand, the very sound of his voice, neither were so terrible as she had pictured them beforehand. It was an actual relief when he was there, talking to her, looking at her, even brushing her face for a moment with his lips.

She shivered a little, but presently grew more composed and could smile, though only faintly, across the room at her father to reassure him.

He rose hurriedly and went away, conscious to the very core of his heart that it would have been easier to bear the most pitiful reproaches than this gentle, most pathetic patience.

"Don't stay too long, Johnson," he said, nervously, as he reached the door. "Remember, she is very far from being strong yet."

Mr. Johnson took the hint, and only remained for a few moments, talking in a desultory manner of the incidents that had occurred during Winifred's illness; and his matter-of-fact manner did much to calm her repressed excitement, her hatred of his presence. She grew more collected, more resolute to go on with what she had begun to the very end, bitter as it certainly would be.

Neither was the man unimpressed with the interview. For the first time he understood that there might be depths in her character for which he had not hitherto given her credit, that she was not so weak, so purposeless as she had seemed.

He accorded her a half-grudging respect, and, moreover, was not a little grateful to her for the steadfastness she showed.

For reasons of his own he was bent upon this marriage; and though his passion for Judith had made him willing, at a word from her, to relinquish his plans, he was, on the whole, well satisfied that things were to remain as they had been before.

It was only Judith who was ill-pleased.

She had looked upon this illness as a blessing in disguise, believing that it would open the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Sherston to the real state of their daughter's feelings, and that they would forbid the consummation of the sacrifice at which, up till now, they had been willing to assist.

But when she saw that the position was evidently unchanged, she grew hopeless, and the occurrences of the next few days did not tend to lessen her dismay.

The doctor, who had thought very gravely of Winifred's case, now gave it as his opinion that her constitution was anything but good, and that she ought to leave India at once.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2076. Back numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.)

CONTENTMENT is better than money, and just about as scarce.

## Gleanings

THE fool that kills himself never mistakes the wrong person.

"DROP me a line!" as the drowning man said to the fellow on deck.

A LOUD TALKING TELEPHONE.—Among recent French inventions is the loud talking telephone. By its use a speaker's words are transmitted to the other end of the connection with all of their original force, and that, too, while the speaker and the listener need not disturb themselves to go to the telephone. That is, a man may sit in his easy chair, puffing away at a cigar, or may even be in a room adjoining that containing the transmitter, and talk to another man at a distance, who may be conducting himself similarly, with as much ease and distinctness as though they were conversing face to face.

RAPID DIVORCE.—Chicago would appear to be a most convenient place for ill-assorted married couples, for the city's reputation for bustle and hurry extends even to its divorce proceedings. Of the couples married each year one-ninth eventually find their way to the divorce court, when, if the dissatisfied party has the evidence ready, two minutes will suffice to untie the matrimonial knot. At the Saturday morning sessions the parade of would-be divorcees is continuous. The judge mumbles the names of the litigants, and no one understands what he says except the applicants. A few perfunctory questions follow, and then the parties are dismissed—freed. The record Saturday morning's work for one judge is thirty-eight divorces, but on one morning last December fifty-two couples were divorced.

PRIZE THE POOR BACHELOR.—In Argentina a man is supposed to have arrived at the proper age for taking a wife when he is twenty years old. The man who does not marry then is fined five dollars for every month he remains unmarried until he is thirty, when the fine is five dollars a month until he is thirty-five, when it is increased to forty dollars a month, and remains at that figure for fifteen years. If at fifty the man is an incorrigible bachelor, he has to pay thirty dollars a month, and continues to do so until he is seventy-five, should he live so long. After that age, the State realizes that his value in the marriage market is limited, and he is fined only twenty dollars a year, and even that payment ceases should he live to be eighty. For the privilege, therefore, of remaining unmarried, a man would have to pay, supposing he lived his allotted period of seventy-five years, no less than 13,700 dollars, and it is only a cynic who would say bachelorhood is cheap at the price.

SITTING CROSS-LEGGED.—The cross-legged attitude is general from Siam eastward through the Malay countries. In the jungle you will see a man crouch, the knees raised, the arms folded over them and the chin resting on the arm. Some tribes, as the Dyaks, carry a mat dangling behind as part of their ordinary costume to shield them from the damp soil. But seldom, indeed, will a man sit upon a log or a root, though there be plenty around. The idea does not enter his mind. More rarely still, if that be possible, will you observe him squatting. Women always crouch upon the floor, of course, with the knees bent sideways, thus resting on the outer part of one thigh; a mighty uncomfortable posture, as it seems to us! It may be assumed, therefore, that sitting down is an acquired habit. If any savages practise it—as a convenience simply—I have neither seen nor heard of them. But we are all convinced nowadays that the ideas and usages of the natural man were everywhere much alike in that stage of development. If so, it follows that the inhabitants of Europe squatted, or stood on one leg—or, at least, did not sit. All human creatures would sit down if the operation were natural; but reviewing the population of the globe, it seems likely that the men and women who sit are less than ten per cent.

"Why do they number convicts?" "Because they've lost their good names."

In one respect the ladies have a parallel. The spring chicken never tells its age.

DISAPPOINTED.—The story is told of a Scotchman, one of several brothers, whose father, a wealthy man, had died. There was much quarrelling about the property. A friend consoled with him on the bereavement. "Well," said he, "our father's death might have been a real pleasure to us, instead of that it is only a misery."

INDIANS WHO LIVE ON CLOVER.—There are some Indians in Mendocino that may not live "in clover," as we understand the phrase, but it is certain that they live on it. Strange to say, they make it a regular article of food, going out into the fields and pulling up the plant and eating it by handfuls—leaves, stems, flower-heads and all. These same Indians use many plants that white men find no value in, among them seaweeds, fungi, lichens, ferns, and conifers.

TWO HUNDRED YEARS OLD.—A story comes from St. Petersburg of a Russian peasant, an inmate in a Tomsk hospital, who is said to be 200 years old. Evidence is not wanting to support the extraordinary claim. He has quite an array of documents, which include a passport dated 1763, in which he is described as sixty years of age; the death certificate of his wife, dated 1780; and that of his son at the age of ninety in 1824. He is said to be mentally sound, which is much more probable than the rest of the statements.

THE USES OF VOLCANOES.—Volcanoes act as the safety-valves of the world, without which the crust of the earth would in all probability burst with explosive force, and with a resultant cataclysm appalling to contemplate. Volcanoes tend, in fact, to maintain the normal stable equilibrium between the interior and the outer surface of the world. Moreover, in the course of time they help to equalise the relationship between the sea and land areas of the globe. Volcanic action has been one of the most potent agencies in the formation of the present condition of the globe.

AN UNMISTAKABLE RECORD.—Watch the right-side of his face if you want to catch a rascal napping. The right side is the homely side, just as the left side is the better looking. In the latter all the defects are softened; in the former the lines are bold and harsh, but they have as compensations strength and character. Defects are, however, accentuated here, and so, when you suspect a man, or a woman either, for that matter, stand on his right and closely watch his expression. There never was an actor skilful enough to cover up the marks of his real personality as nature has stamped them on the right side of the face.

COPPER JEWELLERY.—Copper is the most fashionable as well as the newest of the metals employed by the jeweller, and all the smartest things in the way of sleeve links, card and cigarette cases, belt buckles, vases and the like shows it. It is highly ornamental, so used, and remarkably beautiful. It holds the same relation to silver and gold as do gun metal, which is essentially steel, and kaysarin, which has block tin for its basis. It is made up in combination with silver, is reddish in hue, highly polished, and it costs just about the same as would a similar article of solid silver. It affords a relief from the sombre gun metal and the shiny silver, and some people think it is prettier than either. Many of the new articles shown are delightfully artistic. Sleeve links of the royal copper, with silver rims and silver-imposed heads and the links were much admired. Silver vases with copper holders and especially silver and copper card and smokers' cases, are among those most in demand. The metal is also used for flesh-brushes, whisks and toilet articles generally. It is scarce at present, but will become more plentiful as the makers are better equipped for turning it out.

**DATA FOR THE MOMENT.**—“Will you allow me to ask you a question?” interrupted a man in the audience. “Certainly, sir,” said the hell-binder. “You have been giving us a lot of figures about immigration, increase of wealth, the growth of trusts, and all that,” said the man. “Let’s see what you know about figures yourself. How do you find the greatest common divisor?” Slowly and deliberately the orator took a glass of water. Then he pointed his finger straight at the questioner. Lightning flashed from his eyes, and he replied in a voice that made the gas jets quiver: “Advertise for us, you ignoramus!” The audience cheered and yelled, and stamped, and the wretched man who had asked the question sneaked out of the hall, a total wreck.

**POSITIONS AT A SOVEREIGN A POUND.**—In these days of agricultural depression it is somewhat startling to find it recorded that a variety of the potato has produced a crop worth £36,000 per acre. The “Gardener’s Magazine” describes a number of new varieties of potatoes, one of which is now selling at £10. a pound, that price being, of course, paid for tubers for planting. It is pointed out that if ten tons per acre were grown by the acre on one acre of land, and a sale found for them, that would mean a gross return of £2,400. But it has been recorded that the variety has yielded seventeen tons per acre, and this, at 20s. per pound, means, as pointed out by our contemporary, £38,000!

**ISLAND OF WRECKS.**—Newfoundland is the island of wrecks, more than 100 having occurred in the Ferryland peninsula alone during the past forty years. Some years as many as eleven large ocean steamers have gone ashore. The islanders do a good business in selling the old iron, copper, lead, and portions of machinery which they recover from the bottom of the sea. To locate the wreck deposits a sort of sea telescope is used—a long tin funnel with a glass bottom which is employed to ascertain the whereabouts of shoals of fish. With these instruments it is possible to examine the bottom of the sea in shoal water. The business is being extended this year and the quantity of material to be recovered is practically inexhaustible.

**A DISEASE OF CHESTNUTS.**—In many districts in Italy and Spain, the chestnut takes the place of oats, rye, and rice. Chestnut groves are abundant in all the mountain districts of Italy and Spain, and the season of chestnut gathering is the harvest festival of those countries. In the old times chestnuts were the common ration provided for the soldier, and when there was a probability that a castle was likely to be besieged, out went the soldiers and laid violent hands on all the stores of chestnuts within easy reach. Chestnuts in Italy, doura in Egypt, sweet potatoes in many inland districts in Africa, bananas, cassava, dates, and figs, almost everywhere in the tropics, wheat in the temperate zones—these are staples where meat is a luxury.

**EXTENSIVE NUMBERING.**—Houses are not numbered according to their sequence in Japan, but according to the order of their erection. That is to say, Number Seventy-Two may adjoin Number One, with Number One Hundred and Two on the opposite side. Number Two is probably a mile down the street. The city of Tokio is made up of thirteen hundred and thirty streets, in which are three hundred and eighteen thousand three hundred and twenty houses. These houses are divided up into fifteen wards. If a street passes through more than one ward the houses are numbered according to the wards in which they are—that is, a street passing through six wards will possess six number cases. It would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack for a stranger to try to find a number in Tokio, but a jinrikisha driver knows the position and number of almost every one of the houses in Tokio. He is able to do this by having made this business the study of his life.

## Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

*The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.*

*All letters must give the name and address of the writer, not for publication but as a guarantee of good faith.*

**E. F. W.**—The engagement-ring in this country is generally worn on the third finger of the left hand.

**ELLA.**—Ostrich feathers are quoted at various prices, according to quality and the several fluctuations of supply and demand.

**EVA.**—Apply to the Civil Service Commissioners, 3, Cannon Row, Westminster, between 10 and 4, when you will obtain all information.

**W. C. L.**—Army and Navy tokens, such as that described, are not ranked as curiosities by numismatists, and consequently have no special value.

**C. L. V.**—Stylographic pens are furnished with a sharp hard-metal top, while in fountain pens the writing medium is a gold or other pen, according to their make or the fancy of the writer. Both are fed from the handle, which serves as a reservoir for the ink.

**E. A. A.**—As a rule, the lady should take the inside of the walk when they are walking in the city or village streets. If they are walking in country roads, the lady should walk on the gentleman’s left side, so that his right arm will be free to protect her, in case protection should become necessary.

**T. T.**—Your hair is reddish-brown—auburn. Do not “blondine” it. No sensible woman blondines her hair. You can darken it if you wish by washing it in a warm tea of red-oak bark, or preparation of iron, but it would be better to wear it as it is. It suits your complexion better than any artificial paint.

**BRIGHTER MAID.**—1. A well-developed seventeen-year old girl should weigh about 100 pounds, and stand about five feet one or two inches in her stockings. 2. In choosing a husband, let personal beauty be a secondary consideration; true worth is of primary importance. Some persons claim that blondes should mate with brunettes, and vice versa; but it is foolish to imagine that this should be an inflexible rule. 3. A girl of seventeen years should select for a life partner one who is but two or three years her senior. Twelve years difference is, generally speaking, hardly compatible with happiness.

**CONSTANCE.**—Such behaviour on the part of the young lady cannot justly be called improper, and it certainly is not dishonourable. But it is indiscreet, and shows that she lacks tact. It also indicates that she either has no idea how it hurts a vain young man to have a lady talk to him in a complimentary way about the admirable qualities of other young men, or else that she does know all about the vanity and weakness of young men in that respect, and takes delight in making them individually miserable by praising their rivals.

**AUNT DOBA.**—St. Nicholas (the Santa Claus, or Klaus, of the Dutch) was the patron saint of boys. He is said to have been the Bishop of Myra, and to have died in the year 326. The young were universally taught to revere him, and the popular fiction which represents him as the bearer of presents to children on Christmas Eve is well known. According to one legend, St. Nicholas supplied three destitute maidens with marriage portions by secretly leaving money at their window, and as this occurred just before Christmas, he thus was made the purveyor of the gifts of the season to the children in Flanders and Holland. Another legend describes the Saint as having brought three murdered children to life again; and this rendered him the patron of boys.

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**JANIE.**—A stove polish that is easily mixed and applied is made as follows:—Grind any non-combustible black pigment with a sufficient quantity of silicate of potash, or liquid glass, to make it of a proper consistency for application. When the polish becomes dry, it will be found smooth and shining and very durable.

**BELLA.**—Avoid quarrels. Your beau will probably return to you and you will be reconciled to him. Then try to have your relations made permanent by a marriage engagement. Young people must be patient with each other. Curb your pride and caprice. Be gentle and amiable. Do not put off the wedding-day too long.

**THE UNKNOWN.**—1. The gentleman who has been corresponding with the unknown person—who, instead of being a female, may be one of the sterner sex—had better be sure of such identity before exposing himself to the ridicule that may follow his visit. 2. Your height and weight are both slightly above the average at twenty-two. 3. Wait until the girl has attained her eighteenth year, and then perhaps her mother will interpose no objection to your suit. If you love her as devotedly as claimed, the time (one year) will quickly pass away, and both parties will have gained greatly in common sense and worldly experience.

